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HOWARD ASHTON  
AND  
THE WORLD HE LIVED IN  
*VIRGINIA MILLER*



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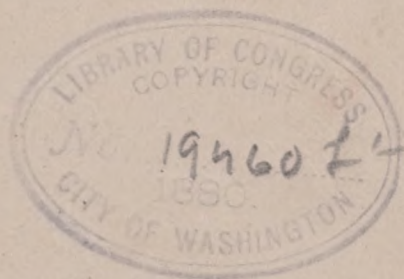
HOWARD ASHTON,

AND

THE WORLD HE LIVED IN.

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BY

VIRGINIA MILLER.



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TO

—\*THE BOYS AND GIRLS\*—

OF THE

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN SABBATH SCHOOLS,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.







## PREFACE.

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THE incidents recorded in this little work, although woven and interwoven, are all founded on "Truth, which is stranger than fiction."

AUTHOR.







# CONTENTS.

Chapter	Page
I.—THE STARTING-POINT . . . . .	9
II.—HOME AND HOME INFLUENCES . . . . .	15
III.—NEW TRIALS . . . . .	23
IV.—SICKNESS AND DEATH . . . . .	35
V.—PURPOSES AND CROSS-PURPOSES . . . . .	44
VI.—SOWING THE WIND . . . . .	62
VII.—VACATION . . . . .	81
VIII.—WEDDING AND WINE . . . . .	84
IX.—WALKING OVER SLIPPERY PLACES . . . . .	89
X.—IN THE DEEP WATERS . . . . .	100
XI.—RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT . . . . .	117
XII.—GONE UP HIGHER . . . . .	138
XIII.—CLOUDS THICKEN . . . . .	147
XIV.—EDUCATION COMPLETED . . . . .	155
XV.—PASTORAL WORK . . . . .	159
XVI.—DOINGS AND SAYINGS . . . . .	166
XVII.—HARVEST OF DEATH . . . . .	181
XVIII.—HEART FAINTS AND FAILS . . . . .	187
XIX.—SEEDS BY THE WAYSIDE . . . . .	192
XX.—THE END . . . . .	205







# HOWARD ASHTON,

AND

THE WORLD HE LIVED IN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE STARTING-POINT.

“Prepare to meet thy God.”

“Leaves have their time to fall,  
And flowers to wither at the north-wind’s breath,  
And stars to set—but all—  
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!”

*Mrs. Hemans.*

“Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes.”

WITH what solemn awe did these oft-repeated words drop from the trembling lips of the man of God, as he looked down on the cold, still form before him! Among those gathered around the newly made grave, none felt their force more than Howard Ashton.



Only yesterday the two boys—the living and the dead—their lessons over, walked together and talked of the bright future awaiting them; but, alas! we know not whither our footsteps tend. In one short hour the life-work of Willie Mason was done! The oft-told tale must be told again, of venturesome boys who find the still water of the deep river so delightful that danger is forgotten. They go beyond their depth, and one of their number returns no more. The bright, manly boy, who went forth from his happy home so full of life and joy, is brought back cold and lifeless, to go no more out forever. Closed are the sparkling eyes, and stilled the winsome voice. The stricken household can only bow the head and be dumb before God; for He hath done it.

Howard Ashton's first great grief came when the waters closed above his friend. They had known and loved each other from infancy. The joys of one were the joys of the other. The little trials and troubles of school-boy life were alike shared. Now one was taken, and the one who was left found it difficult to realize the great change that had taken place. He had looked upon the still form, cold in death, kissed the marble brow for the last time, and now he beholds the narrow coffin lowered to its last resting-place. Nothing more remains to be done but weep. That little mound of



earth is all that is left to show, that another mortal has laid aside his earthly garments, and

“Gone to join the innumerable throng,  
Who worship round the great white throne.”

What next! what next! This startling question came back to the newly-awakened boy. By the way-side, in the old familiar haunts, the woods echoed it—the very air seemed to breathe it. In the deep darkness, when sleep forsook him, the night took up the strain, and kept pressing home the question, “*What next?*” Where would my soul be to-night had I been called to my account instead of Willie?” kept repeating itself, and would not be hushed unanswered.

“For dear, lost Willie, I hope—I firmly believe—all is well; but had death come to me so unexpectedly, I would have been found, like the foolish virgins, with my lamp untrimmed and unlighted.”

He could not remember when he was first taught to repeat the Lord's Prayer. In the days and months gone by, the mere repetition of this fully satisfied him; but now, the awakened conscience refused all such worthless consolation. For the first time, he realized something of the presence of that invisible God who watches over us, even while we are forgetful of his being. Strange that we should admire his works, and



not look "from nature up to nature's God." Strange that we should enjoy his bounty, and not recognize the Hand that feeds us.

Howard felt his own helplessness in the hour of his awakening, and

"Angels in their songs rejoice and say,  
Behold he prays."

Sleepless nights and anxious days followed, but they brought no rest to the troubled soul. All was dark. How he longed to pour out his sorrow to a sympathizing friend! To whom should he go? He had not been taught to unbosom his heartaches, even in a parent's willing ear. Think not his home was Christless. Like in many others, religion had its stated times; but it was thought to be too solemn, too sacred a subject to be made a living, talking, breathing theme, for every day's life. To be sure, a family altar had been erected, around which all gathered to offer their incense morning and evening. Sabbath, too, found each member of the family occupying a place in the sanctuary of God. The time-honored Christian duty of reciting the Shorter Catechism, each Lord's-day evening, was adhered to rigidly. No outward form of worship was omitted in this Christian home. But everything was done in a perfunctory manner, or as so much meritorious service; and, as a consequence, dear reader, this



boy, thirteen years of age, strange as you may think it, knew nothing, absolutely nothing, of the great plan of salvation. Nothing of the doctrines of our holy religion. Accustomed to hear the Word read and preached from day to day, until the words of our blessed Saviour seemed an old, familiar story. But now, when death stared him in the face, he knew not whence to turn for comfort. All the knowledge he had stored away, all the scripture and psalms he had committed to memory, seemed as so many hard problems, too intricate to be solved. No one had ever taken him by the hand, and spoken to him, in tender accents, of the love of Jesus. Prayer had seemed only a form, and not the pleading of a soul to a present God. All past experience now looked like hollow mockery. He had only found out that religion was truly a *living, actual* reality. Nothing would satisfy the hungry, seeking soul, but a consciousness of the love and forgiveness of God. All things earthly seemed dross in this dark hour of trial. He felt the anguish of one standing on a volcano, which was ready, at any moment, to burst and bury its victim in its seething, fiery billows.

Many weary days were spent seeking rest and finding none. God's word was searched diligently, prayerfully—hope and fear alternately prevailing. At



length light broke through the heavy mist, and day dawned to the new-born soul. In the light of this glorious morning, he could truly say, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." He knew now, from experience, something of the power of the love of that great God he had so blindly worshiped. Love seemed pervading everything—around, beneath, above. All nature appeared to be rejoicing in this new-found hope. How his heart went out in earnest longings to father, mother, sisters and brothers. That they might, each and all, feel and know this great peace that had come to him, now became the burden of his prayers.



## CHAPTER II.

### HOME AND HOME INFLUENCES.

MANY a child goes astray, not because there is want of prayer or virtue at home, but simply because home lacks sunshine.

Perhaps, before proceeding farther, it would be well to introduce our readers to the family members of this old farm-house. Near the Ohio river, midway between Pittsburg and Wheeling, in a fertile valley, lie the green meadows and the waving wheat-fields, which surround this homestead.

There is little of the picturesque about the cold, bare house, built all around, without symmetry or convenience. Nor are its surroundings any more attractive. Not a flower or tree adorns the enclosure, save a half-withered honey-suckle, a few small bushes and three or four tall, unshapely trees. A rough board-fence finishes the picture. The observer rightly concludes, that beauty and harmony had no part in the preparation of the scene before him.

Within doors the same lack of taste is apparent. From the old-fashioned, straight-backed chairs, to the big, lumbering kitchen-table, everything seems to have



been purchased with an eye to durability. From such surroundings, you may judge of the home-atmosphere, and the lives of the dwellers.

The father, Mr. Ashton, was a selfish, stern man, under whose iron rule all must bend. His family dared not thwart his wishes. They must have no will but his. He was just such a man as drives the young away from home and heaven. A man well informed on a great many subjects, but with views so narrow and sordid, as to repel rather than attract. He had nursed and cherished his self-love so constantly for years, each year growing more self-devoted than the last, that he seemed to take pleasure in his tyranny, and felt himself disappointed if there was no sacrifice he could compel some one to make for his own pleasure or convenience. He was—I was going to use the term Christian; I will say—a professor of Christianity, all law and no gospel.

The mother was one of those meek, gentle women, we sometimes meet, who will submit to be trampled upon rather than have strife. The tender, loving being, this man promised to love and cherish, had, during these years of married life, changed from a light-hearted, merry, fun-loving wife, to a premature old woman, who seldom spoke in the presence of her husband, and was frightened at her own boldness, if she dared make a suggestion.



Three sons and four daughters completed the household. There was Laura, the first-born, about fifteen; then came the twins, Howard and Harry, thirteen; following them were Goldie, Carrie and Kate, aged, respectively, eleven, eight and five. Last of all was little Frankie, the "lamb of the flock," a sweet, lovely babe of six months.

So carefully had Howard concealed his thoughts, during those dark days which preceded his awakening, that not one of this numerous household knew of the change which had been effected. They felt the quiet, gentle influence of his demeanor, so different from his former careless and often wayward conduct, but they knew nothing of the inward struggle. And now, when the light was beginning to shine around his path, much as he longed for parents and friends to rejoice with him, he could not take them by the hand and say, "Come with me, for God has done great things for me." Ashamed of Christ! Ashamed to speak a word for him!

Communion season was approaching, and he felt it to be his duty to unite with the people of God. How many fears and doubts arose to keep him back! Fears that he might partake of this holy ordinance in an unworthy manner, and so crucify afresh his loving Saviour. He feared, too, that he might not be able



to answer the questions he would be asked by the session, and so be rejected by them. Here, now, Satan, that arch enemy, put forth all his cunning, and sought to drive the young disciple to despair. He filled his heart with thoughts of having committed the unpardonable sin. His distress was so great that he determined to open his heart to some one—to his mother first, as she was his best, his most loving friend. To her quiet, gentle, trusting nature the anguish of her sensitive boy was an enigma. Never, since she could remember, was there a time when she did not love and trust her gentle Saviour. How could she understand and sympathize with this struggling, drowning soul! Quietly she pointed him to the Cross, and told him to cast all his care on Jesus, but a strange feeling, she could not overcome, prevented her from kneeling with him then and there, and pouring out her soul to God, for light and direction, to guide this young soul, now struggling for life. She could not kneel and claim God's promise, "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." His great anxiety frightened her. She told him to go and talk to his father, for he could explain things much better than she could.

"Oh, mother! I cannot talk to him. I never was well enough acquainted with him to talk with him," he exclaimed.



But, when day after day passed and no relief came, he took courage and spoke of his trouble to his father. He told him his desire to join the church, and his fear that the way would be closed against him. His father, in his cold, harsh way, assured him that he was entirely too young to connect with the church; that all his trouble arose from the shock, consequent on the sudden death of his friend, Willie Mason.

"You are too young," said his father.

"I am not too young to die," replied Howard.

"To be sure, you are not too young to die; but, even if you are called to die to-morrow, you are just as safe out of the church as in it."

"I cannot find any promise, contained in the Bible, to those outside of the church."

"We have no account of children connecting with the church in the whole Bible. I will not permit you to become a member, only to bring disgrace on the church of Christ."

"Cannot the Almighty Saviour keep children from bringing reproach upon his name, as well as grown persons?"

"They have not the knowledge necessary to keep them from falling into grievous sins. I tell you, Howard, this must be the last of this affair; let me hear no more of this nonsense. Go to work and try



to get rid of these foolish notions. Try to do your duty, and when you are older I will not object to this step. When you arrive at years of maturity, enter the church, of course ; but not now."

And so he went out from the presence of his father, into blackness darker than before. He asked himself, "What now is duty? Must I give up my hopes of heaven? Must I drive these serious thoughts away? Ah, how vain to try! No human efforts could quiet the strivings of God's Spirit, when he was pleading for the soul of this dear, blood-bought mortal. Was it duty to disobey Christ's dying command? Was it duty to disobey his father's express wishes? What must he do? A few more days of unrest, and he unburdened his troubled heart to his pastor, Mr. Brown. He gave him much good advice; tried to enlighten dark places, and encourage weak faith. In after-life, Howard looked back to this hour as one of the happiest and best spent of his whole life. With the earnest prayer of this good man still sounding in his ears, he went forth stronger, more determined to surmount all things for Jesus' sake.

Mr. Brown endeavored to obtain the consent of his father to his uniting with the people of God, but to no purpose. He was more determined than ever, now that he, a minister, would dare meddle in his family affairs.



Mr. Brown tried to conciliate him, telling him of his son's great desire to be numbered among Christ's followers; of his knowledge being superior to that of most boys of his age.

"I feel sure God will accept even children," said Mr. Brown.

"No matter," was Mr. Ashton's reply. "I have said that he is too young, and no amount of pleading will change my mind. I will teach Howard that my word is law, and that I will not tolerate his making family affairs public."

"Not public, Mr. Ashton. Howard only came to his pastor with his burden. For what am I here, except to counsel and direct my flock, more particularly the lambs."

"I am capable of managing my own household, and I do not wish any one to dictate to me."

"Do not misunderstand me, my dear friend. I know you are better fitted to instruct your family than I am. Still I feel it to be my duty to try to have an oversight of my young people, and to speak a word of cheer and comfort to all troubled hearts. God will require their souls at my hand."

Words were of no avail. To Mr. Ashton's stubborn will there was no yielding. Howard was severely reprimanded, for daring to consult Mr. Brown without



first obtaining permission. He was commanded never to mention the subject again.

Mr. Brown, being fully aware of this injunction, wisely advised him to let the matter of uniting with the church rest for a time, but to live very near the Cross, and spend much time at the Throne of Grace, trusting Jesus to remove all difficulties out of the way.

Howard needed not the assurance given, to convince him, that he would be remembered in this good man's prayers.

The communion season passed, and this troubled soul went away unsatisfied, feeling that he had disobeyed the Saviour's dying command. The words of the text that morning were, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Such an impression did these startling words make upon his mind, that a sleepless night followed. He felt almost ready to despair, when light, as from above, broke through the clouds, and, ere he was aware, as the day dawned, he fell asleep repeating the words of the Psalmist:

"In vain you rise ere morning break,  
And late your nightly vigils keep,  
And bread of anxious care partake;  
- *God gives to his beloved sleep.*"



## CHAPTER III.

### NEW TRIALS.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

"Thou hast often deeply wounded  
The best feelings of my heart;  
But an unforgiving spirit  
Cannot form of me a part."

HOWARD applied himself, with new energy, to his studies, now that he had an aim in view. He had devoted his time, his talent, his all, to the Lord, and, even now, he looked forward to the time when he should proclaim "the good news and glad tidings of salvation."

A prize had been offered to the best speller in the school—the test to be public and most thorough. The day long looked for arrived at last. The little school-house was filled with friends, who had come to witness the contest. Howard Ashton and Milo Lee were chosen captains, it being admitted that they were the best spellers in the school. At first there were thirty contestants. At the close of the first hour,



only fifteen remained standing. One after another dropped off, until, at the end of the second hour, the captains stood alone. Milo missed a word at last, but, before the teacher had time to pass it, corrected himself. Cries of unfairness were heard on all sides, but Howard, remembering the golden rule, requested that no account be taken of the mistake. The scholars looked on annoyed. The teacher reluctantly consented, and again the contest was opened. For nearly one hour more the two stood, neither flagging. It seemed as though no word could be found, in spelling-book or dictionary, that was likely to end the contest. At last Milo hesitated, then missed a word. There was no use in denying this time, so he sat down very ungraciously, but the look he gave Howard was as revengeful as it was unkind. For another hour Howard stood alone. Night was fast approaching, and as there seemed to be no probability of Howard going down at all, Mr. Hope announced the contest ended, and Howard the successful candidate. He then proceeded to put the prize, an unabridged dictionary, into his hands. It was just the book he had so wished to possess, but the look he received from his rival warned him he had lost a friend; he would much rather have lost the prize. He said as much to Milo, who turned from him with a sneer, as though he was the injured



party. Congratulations were lavished on the hero from all sides, but the sweetest words of praise he heard were from his father :

“My son, you have done well.”

These were the first words of commendation he had ever received from him.

It was not many days before Milo had a chance of wreaking his vengeance on his unsuspecting victim. One of the small boys, Johnnie Mathews, had a new knife, a present from his father, which he was showing to the boys. Howard had it in his hand when the bell rang, but Sam Lyons asked to look at it just as Howard was returning it to its owner. He thought no more about it until Johnnie asked him for it at noon. He told him he had given it to Sam Lyons, but Sam denied all knowledge of it ; said he had not seen it at all. Upon inquiry, no one was found who had seen Sam have it, but all had seen Howard looking at it.

“Suppose we get out a search-warrant for it,” proposed Sam.

“All right !” shouted several voices.

“A search-warrant is just the thing. We want some fun,” said Sam.

“You need not examine Howard’s desk,” whispered Milo, just loud enough to be heard by all. “He is too much of a saint to steal.”



Search was made, and, much to the surprise of all, the knife was found in Howard's desk, in a box with his pencils. Howard was shocked, and wondered how it got there; but it only needed a second thought to convince him that it was a plot of Milo's to disgrace him. It had doubtless been placed there while he was reciting. He protested his innocence, and charged Milo and Sam with attempting to injure him. They denied, *indignantly*, all knowledge of the affair, saying it was some sleight of hand Howard had learned from his new dictionary.

Howard instinctively clenched his fist, and the hot blood mounted to his face, but just then a voice seemed to whisper in his ear: "When ye are reviled, revile not again," and he turned away, more vexed with himself than with his tormentors.

The teacher, Mr. Hope, tried in vain to unravel the mystery. He felt convinced that Howard was innocent, but how could this be proved? He thought best to wait a few days, to see if things would not develop more fully. A week passed, and Milo's friends demanded a decision. Although Mr. Hope still believed Howard to be innocent, yet he could see no way of proving it, so he kindly requested, and even urged, the boys to drop the matter for the present, hoping all would be made plain very soon. They said: "No, no, it must be decided." See-



ing they were so determined, he called a meeting of the Board and put the matter into their hands. After carefully listening to both sides, they decided that Howard was not only a thief, but was trying to injure his schoolmates by casting the blame on them. After reproving him severely in the presence of the school, they decided that he should be deprived entirely of play-hours for a month, and if at the end of that time he acknowledged his fault, and publicly asked the pardon of those he had wronged, he should be restored to the good-will of the school. If these acknowledgments were not made, he was to be expelled from the school in disgrace.

Howard's feelings may be better imagined than described. To think that the boys, who he felt certain were the authors of his trouble, should now exultingly triumph over him, was more than he could endure. After the other boys had passed out, he took his books and was about to leave, when Mr. Hope stopped him with—

“You are not going to leave school, Howard, I hope?”

“I cannot face my companions, after what has just now taken place. I feel I must not come here again. I have no friends.”

“Do not feel so badly, my dear friend. I feel you



are deeply wronged, but there is a just God in heaven who *can* and *will* deliver you. Without doubt he has a wise purpose in permitting you thus to suffer. Yet know, he never allows his children to carry burdens too heavy for them to bear. Do not, in this dark hour, forget to look to God for strength. He has said, 'My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.'"

"All this is very true, but, oh, to be called a thief and a liar is too bad! What could be more degrading?"

"To *be a thief and a liar* would be a great deal worse. I feel sure all will yet be well. Do not let these things so distress you. Let us kneel down and commit our cause to God. He will bring us safely out of the storm. There is no darkness too deep for him to fathom."

Strengthened by the prayer of faith, Howard went home, where the word of his disgrace had preceded him. He went home to meet his father's angry taunts, and his mother's sad, tearful face. Even Harry said,

"Howard, why don't you *own up*, and be done with it?"

"O Harry! do you, too, believe me guilty?"

"All the evidence is against you. What else can I believe?" replied Harry.

Day after day passed; days of dreary length to poor



Howard, who received no word of encouragement, either at home or among his companions at school. One morning, when he opened his dictionary, he discovered that some one had written "Thief," in large letters under his name. How he wished he had not received this book! To it he could readily trace all his late difficulties. He did not mingle with the scholars, but no chance escaped without some rude boy reminding him of his trouble. Even those who believed him wronged failed to cheer him now. There was a Friend, mighty to save, at hand. He who does not permit even a "sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice," did not forsake this boy in the day of his sore trial.

About a week after this incident, the boys were engaged in a merry game of snow-ball. Howard appeared, walking rapidly toward home.

"Now for some sport, boys," remarked Sam Lyons.

"Let us give the thief a cooling," said Milo Lee.

And, ere Howard could retrace his steps, the snow-balls were flying from every direction. He walked on, not heeding them, until one harder than snow felled him to the ground. A wild cheer filled the air, but when he did not arise, his brother, who had witnessed the dastardly deed, rushed forward, and when he beheld the pallid face, cried, "He is dead! You have killed him!"



The boys, now thoroughly alarmed, came crowding around their prostrate victim. Mr. Hope arriving at this opportune moment, immediately examined the wounded boy. He found a deep gash on the right temple, from which the blood was streaming profusely. After some difficulty the flow of blood was stanchd, and the heart began to beat feebly. The dark eyes opened slowly, only to close again wearily. The lips moved, but no sound was uttered. Then followed a swoon, more death-like than the first. When consciousness was again restored, Mr. Hope inquired who threw the stone.

“For,” said he, “this cut was not made with a snow-ball.”

After some search, a snow-ball was found, in which was concealed a ragged, jagged stone; but no one knew who threw it. When Howard could speak, he was closely questioned, and he declared that he had seen the ball made, and that he had tried to evade it, but unfortunately he had not “dodged” in time. However, he would not give the name of the guilty party.

He was carried home, and a physician summoned, who confirmed their fears—very little hopes. He was lying in a comatose condition, from which the doctor thought he might never awake. The night passed away and the morning dawned, but it brought no hope



to the anxious watchers. The stupor had given place to the wildest delirium. He raved of home, school and friends. Sometimes he was warning sinners to repent and come to Jesus. Then he imagined himself lost, because he had not united with the church. Now he was lamenting that his friends had all forsaken him. Then he talked of his trouble in the school, and of the ball by which he had been injured, but even in his incoherent wanderings, he would not divulge the name of the boy who had hurled the murderous missile.

The father now felt that he had been very unkind, nay, cruel, in the treatment of his son. What now would he not have given, to feel that he had done all in his power to promote his boy's happiness! How vividly he remembered his tones, while asking permission to sit down at the Lord's table!

How his heart smote him, while listening to his wailings for neglected duty! This great wrong, the father felt, could probably never be righted. He prayed for the life of his son, that he might be spared long enough at least, to permit him to fulfill this great desire of his heart. This was no formal petition, but the crying of the heart's desires. For the first time he realized something of the power of prayer.

How did Milo Lee endure these wearisome hours?



for, no doubt, the reader surmises truly, he was the author of the mischief.

He was terrified, when he beheld his work. And when this brave boy, he had so persecuted, nobly shielded him, his terror turned to keen remorse. All that long, never-to-be-forgotten night, he tossed feverishly on his couch. When sleep did come, at length, it brought no rest, only dreams of the day's sad work. He tried to pray, but his guilty conscience would not allow this sacrilege. How he despised his jealousy, that had led to all this trouble!

Morning came at last, and with it new trials for the guilty boy, for he had determined to make a full confession of his crime, no matter what the cost. The humiliation and anguish of his parents were too distressing for pen to describe.

For many days, the fever burned in the veins of the suffering boy. Scarcely a moment of consciousness was granted the weeping friends, who stood around the bed, watching and praying for the light of reason to dawn, ere the young life should go out forever. Three doctors said he must die; but here man's extremity was God's opportunity. A day came, the turning-point not only in the disease, but also in the boy's whole life. The crisis was safely passed; he would live; and living, he decided, then and there, to live



only to Him who bought him. "I give myself to thee. 'Tis all I have to give." Very slowly he came back to life. It was many weeks before Howard was able to join his school-mates. When he came back, teacher and scholars seemed to vie with each other in kind attentions.

Milo bravely confessed his fault, acknowledging that he threw the stone, and that the knife was placed in the desk by Sam, at his suggestion.

He was freely forgiven, and a warm attachment was formed by these boys, that grew in strength and continued through life. Sam made no amends for the cruel part he had acted ; not even did he show a spirit of contrition for the wrong he had committed. Howard's one great object, now, was to prepare himself for the ministry. He had much with which to contend. He finally obtained his father's consent to study with Mr. Brown, provided he prepared his recitations at night, and assisted on the farm as usual during the day.

Thus one, two years passed away—years of hard study and hard toil. By performing odd jobs, as he had opportunity, he obtained a little money, which he carefully hoarded for the purpose of purchasing second-hand books, as he had use for them. Many times he felt disposed to give up all efforts to procure an education, and submit to the only life that seemed to open



before him, but the promise he had made on his sick-bed, when death seemed very near, incited him onward and upward.

Seeking strength from above he went forward, and the way was opened before him. At the close of the second year he was prepared to enter the Freshman class; but where was he to obtain the means to defray his expenses while at college? His father could have extended a helping hand, if he had felt disposed to do so, but he even refused to allow him the *time* necessary to work his own way, saying,

“He is a better scholar now than I am, and, as I intend for him to follow my own occupation, I will not consent to his going to college at all. I don’t believe in educating boys only to despise the ignorance of their parents. He must be contented with what schooling he has and settle down on the farm, where I will find him plenty of work.”



## CHAPTER IV.

### SICKNESS AND DEATH.

“There is no flock, however watched and tended,  
But one dead lamb is there!  
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,  
But has one vacant chair!”

VERY unexpectedly, death came stealing into this household one bright summer day. Little Carrie, after a few days of intense suffering, closed her short life on earth. From the first, so violent was the attack, that but little hope was entertained of her recovery. She was aware her end was near, and her terror was pitiable to behold. She called on father, mother, sisters and brothers to keep her from dying. In vain was she soothed with her own goodness and love. Child as she was, she felt that she needed something more than her own righteousness. Howard's conscience reproved him bitterly for neglecting to speak to this young sister while in health. Now he could not talk; his heart was too full. He could only pray. He spent much time in his closet, pleading for the life of



the suffering child, or, this being denied, that Jesus would speak comforting words to her soul, ere the soul would be separated from the body.

It was after all efforts, both on the part of parents and pastor, had failed to comfort the little sufferer, that the strong man, who had never asked human help before, sought the chamber of his son, who he felt, rather than knew, was constantly engaged in prayer. All pride and haughtiness were gone—only the father remained—when, laying aside all harshness, he begged Howard to go to Carrie, and see what he could do to console her.

“If I only could, but I cannot speak when I make the attempt.”

“Make another trial. Remember she is very near death. I cannot see her die in this distress. Your religion is happier, simpler than mine. I feel its power, but I cannot grasp it with my weak faith. Go, and may God grant that you may be enabled to make her darkness light.”

Howard went down-stairs, praying for help as he went. When he entered the room his mother arose, saying:

“We hope Howard can assist you more than the rest of us have done.”

Going out, she left them alone.



Carrie fixed her eyes, so full of troubled fear, searchingly on her brother, and cried:

“Tell me how to die! oh, tell me how to die! Can you not save me from death? Are you afraid to die?”

“Dear little sister, I, too, have endured this anguish. I have passed through the deep waters; but Jesus found me, and took all my fears away. Now I am not afraid of death, for I know he lives who has said, ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’ Again, ‘I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.’ Just put your trust in him, and all will be well. He is able, he is willing: doubt no more.”

“I cannot, I cannot. I do not understand. I have sinned so often.”

“The precious blood of Jesus will wash all your sins away. Only trust him and you are safe. Believe on Jesus Christ.”

“If I only could! but something won’t let me.”

“Dear Carrie, do you not remember last winter, when you were crossing the creek on the old foot-log, how you lost your balance, and came near falling in the water?”



“Oh, yes! and how father caught me, and carried me across in safety! Oh, yes! I remember that.”

“Were you afraid father would let you fall in the water?”

“Oh, no! I knew he was strong, and able to carry me. I knew he would not let me fall.”

“Dear sister, can you not just so trust Jesus? He is strong and able to carry you, just as father did. Just let go yourself, and cling to him as you did to father, and he will carry you safely across the Jordan of death, and place you at his right hand on high.”

“I am beginning to see: but I am acquainted with father and can see him, and know he is near.”

“Not as near as Jesus is. He is here, right in this room, waiting for you to give yourself to him. He has said, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;’ and again: ‘He taketh the lambs in his arms, and carrieth them in his bosom.’”

“I think I see now. I am not much afraid, if he is here, to go along.”

“He is here. He hears us talking. He hears our prayers. You know you always pray to him.”

“I say my prayers, but it always seemed as if I was saying them to some great being, away off, who would not hear such poor little prayers as mine.”



"No, dear! he hears you and me, just as well as the greatest king on earth. Even our thoughts, before our lips frame the words, are all well known to him. Not only does he hear, but he answers our prayers, whenever they are for our good."

"Did you know this before?"

"Yes, dear. I have found this all in my own experience."

"Oh! Howard, why did you never tell me?"

"Why did I not? That is the question I keep asking myself. Why have I let these precious years go by, without making known my dear Saviour's love, to the little ones of my father's house? Why have I? I can only plead a shameful timidity. I knew my duty, and did it not. May God forgive me and make me more faithful in the future."

"I am not afraid to die now. Jesus is near. All is light. I am happy now. Won't you pray for me?"

Dropping on his knees, Howard poured out such a prayer as only a soul full of a sense of its own responsibility can utter. He knew he was pleading for one near death. He prayed that all dark things might be made light, and that clouds might melt away in the sunshine of Jesus' love. He asked that, if possible, her life might be spared; but, if it was otherwise deter-



mined, he prayed for strength to say, "Thy will, O God, be done." This was the first time he had ever had courage to pray before any human being, but in his deep earnestness he forgot his fear. While he prayed the answer came, and the little girl's peace that passeth all knowledge shone in the unearthly brightness of her mild blue eyes.

"Thank God," she said, "the darkness is all gone. My sufferings will be easily borne now. I am almost home."

A few minutes later, her mother, entering, saw the change. Kissing her, she said:

"My dear, you are feeling much better."

"Oh, yes, mother, I am not afraid to die now. Oh! mother, did you know God was so near to us, and we need not be afraid? Do not cry, mother; it makes me sad to see you weep when I am so happy!"

Her father entering, she exclaimed:

"Father, I am so happy now. I have learned Howard's way to find God, and now I am not afraid. Father, God hears us when we pray, and I have asked him to take me in his arms and carry me up to heaven when I die; and he will, just as you did last winter, when I came near falling in the creek. Did you know he was so near to us all the time? Howard is not afraid to die; are you, father?"



“I am afraid Jesus is not as near to me as he is to Howard and you, dear. I wish he was.”

After this she fell asleep, and slept so sweetly they hoped she might yet be spared. When she awoke, Howard still sat by her bedside, his hand clasping hers. He had not dared to remove it, for fear her slumber might be disturbed. She was, if possible, happier than ever. She talked a great deal to all her dear ones, and begged them all to come to Jesus. She sent messages, too, to all her little playmates, bidding them “Good-bye,” and desiring them to meet her in heaven.

Once, when she seemed much better, and her mother told her there were some hopes of her recovery, she said :

“I would rather go to heaven, mother. But that is wrong. I wish to die or live, just as God pleases.”

The day before her death, she talked to her father a great deal about Howard.

“You know his desire to enter the ministry, dear father. Won’t you promise me you will not hinder him? He lives so near God, I am sure he will make a good, true minister.”

Her father gave her his promise.

As the time of her departure drew near, her trust in her Saviour grew stronger. Bidding them all a long



farewell, she requested the always appropriate Twenty-third Psalm to be sung. While the words,

“Yea, though I walk through death’s dark vale,”

were being sung, her spirit passed to that home where she could truly say :

“In God’s house for evermore  
My dwelling-place shall be.”

They laid her tenderly away among the daisies in the little church-yard, but the good words she had spoken, and her triumphant death, lived and brought forth much fruit in the hearts of the dear ones left behind, many days after she was mouldering in the dust. Howard, too, now thoroughly awake, sought to impress the dying words of Carrie on the tender minds just now left desolate. Laura, the eldest sister, who had hitherto been careless, now, for the first time, felt her need of a Saviour. She was not ashamed to come to Howard for instruction, in her hour of sorrow and gloom. Even little Kate, though so young in years, seemed to have imbibed the spirit of her dead sister.

Out of the depths of her great grief, arose the cry,  
“O God, prepare me for death!”

So, this young child, in her death, did more for God than many Christians who spend long lives in God’s



service. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

"Light after darkness, gain after loss ;  
Strength after weariness, crown after cross ;  
Sweet after bitter, song after sigh ;  
Home after wandering, praise after cry ;  
Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain ;  
Light after mystery, peace after pain ;  
Joy after sorrow, calm after blast ;  
Rest after weariness, sweet rest at last ;  
Near after distant, gleam after gloom ;  
Love after loneliness, life after tomb ;  
After long agony, rapture of bliss ;  
Christ was the pathway leading to this."



## CHAPTER V.

### PURPOSES AND CROSS-PURPOSES.

"What thou doest, do with thy might."

"Help yourself! It is best, young man.  
Stand up straight, for you know you can.  
Call on nobody! That's the plan.  
When you have showed the world your light,  
Earned your way in the busy fight,  
Friends you will find to the left and right."

AFTER little Carrie's death, the father did not forget his promise in regard to Howard. For many days it was not mentioned. Howard thought it best to let his father take his own time to think the matter over. He was, however, very anxious to know what would be his father's decision, in regard to his going to college immediately. He did not know from whence the means would come, but was willing to trust God to provide. He now felt how wrong it was to chafe and despond, and to abandon his course, because the door seemed shut. Why did he not trust God to open the way before him? He felt the late trouble through which he had passed to be a reproof to



him for his lack of faith. This was the third time he could trace the hand of God rebuking him for looking back, after having put his hand to the plow. First when his friend was snatched from him so suddenly by death's cold hand. Next when his own lamp of life burned so low, and was almost extinguished. And now when his little sister was laid beneath the willows. He dared not look back again, even if he wished to do so.

One evening, about a month after Carrie's death, his father came into his room looking unusually sad. After taking a seat, he spoke as follows:

"Howard, you know the promise I made Carrie, to let you go to college, should you still desire to do so. You know my wish in regard to your entering a profession, but I could not refuse my dying child's request, and I have come to say, if you still think you cannot take to farming, and can work your own way, I will not longer hinder you. You are free to use your own pleasure."

"Oh, father, how can I thank you! All I have been waiting for is your consent."

"You must remember, my boy, it will take money to take you to college, and that I do not feel I can supply. You know I have just finished paying for the farm, and it takes all I can make to keep up



repairs, and take care of my family ; to be sure it is one smaller now," and the usually harsh man wiped a tear from his eye. "I feel, if I give your time, it is all I can do."

"That is all I ask, father. If I cannot work my own way I deserve to fail. I am very sorry to leave you, when you need my help, but God is pointing my way so plainly, that I cannot, I dare not look back. By three heavy strokes has God shown me the way he would have me to go. First in Willie's death; next in my own sickness; and now in the heaviest blow of all, dear Carrie's death. I dare not again falter, or faint by the way, lest a worse thing come upon me."

"I cannot see that these were special providences for *your* punishment more than for others. Without doubt God sends trouble to punish us for our sins, but we cannot trace out one sin more than another."

"I know by my own experience, that each sin brings its own punishment; at least, I think this is true. I had never thought much about preparing for death, until I was aroused by the sudden death of my best friend. In my darkest hour, I promised God to devote myself to his service, should he give me light, and rescue my soul from its terrible despair. Graciously he granted my request. Soon, however, I grew cold in his service, and was about to give up all hopes of



ever entering the ministry, when I was stricken down. Had God called me then, I would have gone into his presence with my vows unfulfilled. Again, God heard my prayers, and rescued me from death. For the last two years, I have been trying to prepare for my work; but, you are aware, how I abandoned all hopes of completing my education. I even questioned God's faithfulness, when the way seemed closed. Because I could not have my own way, opened up straight before me, I determined I would not go at all, in the path God seemed to be pointing out. I should have trusted him, and waited patiently until he said, 'Go forward.' How much easier it is for us to learn to labor, than to wait. All I want is my time. If my life is spared, I can, with God's help, do the rest. God will open up some way for me, if I trust him fully."

"Do as you wish, but I fear you will fail. I am sorry to lose your assistance, but must keep my promise."

"I do not expect to fail. I know the road is rough and steep before me, but others have travelled it, and reached the summit. Why should not I?"

"We cannot hope to be mowers,  
And gather the ripe, golden ears,  
Until we have first been sowers  
And watered the furrows with tears."



Howard now turned his attention toward seeking some employment, in order to secure the necessary means to enter college. As is generally the case with young students, he first tried to procure a situation as teacher. Failing here, he sought for other work, but it seemed there was nothing for him to do. At length, Mr. Turner, who kept a wholesale liquor store, in a neighboring town, offered him good wages, if he would immediately take the place of a clerk who had left him unexpectedly. This offer he rejected. His father urged him to accept it, saying, "Mr. Turner is an honorable man."

"His business does not speak well for him," said Howard. "I would rather shovel and dig all my life, than risk myself in such a place."

"It is not necessary for you to run any risk. You certainly will not be forced to drink."

"I would be compelled to offer the cup to others, which I could not do conscientiously. No, no, I must not go there. My employment must be honest."

"Well, well, do as you please; but you are foolish to throw away such a good offer," replied his father.

At last, through Mr. Brown, he was appointed janitor in C—— college. He was to receive his boarding and tuition in return for his services. He knew he would have much hard labor to perform, yet his heart



went out in thankfulness to the Great Giver, who had opened the way so opportunely. His first day there was one of trials. He was not long in discovering that not only his clothes but also his manners needed much brushing and polishing. Even his old friend, Milo Lee, did not wish to recognize him, and passed with the cold bow of a stranger. Howard was glad when night came to hide away from the rude stares and jeers of the students.

He found his work arduous. He was obliged to work early and late, to attend to his duties and keep up with his studies. He often felt home-sick; for even the members of his own class, if they did not actually evade him, failed to notice or give him a welcome. About a week after the session opened he was given a room-mate, a young man by the name of Addison Moore. He was from the southern part of Georgia; a mere puppet, with more conceit than brains, and who was more perplexed about the fit of a coat than about his theorems in geometry. When introduced to Howard he stared at him as he would have done at an Arab, and said to the student that had brought him to his room:

“I think, sir, you have made a mistake; this young person cannot be my room-mate.”

He did not condescend to converse with Howard,



but had many orders to give. The next day Howard heard him complain to one of the professors, that he could not room with a Hottentot. If there was no other room to be found he would be obliged to return home, much as it would inconvenience him. The next day another young man came into his room, and, after some conversation, agreed to exchange rooms with young Moore. This young man's name was Wilbur Norris. He did not like his room-mate, who was a weak, effeminate young man. Young Norris was some three years Howard's senior, and was considered one of the brightest students in his class. He was kind, sensible and considerate; but, with all his good traits of character, he was a miserable skeptic. Some remarks he made during the first evening led Howard to distrust him, and when he took his Bible to read his usual devotional exercise, for a moment he wavered, studying whether or not to kneel down and commit his all to the Saviour's keeping; but the words, "If ye are ashamed of me before men," flashed into his mind, and regardless of that disdainful curl of the lip he dropped upon his knees, and in his heart-felt prayer forgot the presence of any one save God. Many times in the future did he look back and bless God for the victory of that hour. "Henceforth, thy going out and in, God keep for ever will."



In that same hour did Wilbur Norris determine to leave no stone unturned to shake the faith of that young, trembling heart. Cautiously he set to work to sow his tares. By gentle means did he expect to undermine the faith of his unsuspecting victim. How careful he was to live a moral, upright life! He observed the Sabbath as rigidly as Howard did, saying he observed it because it was necessary to have the rest and quiet, in order to continue his studies during the week. He offered infidel books to Howard to read, but when he did not read them he said nothing, but quietly laid them aside. Speaking of them again, Wilbur asked:

“How do you expect to meet these arguments if you do not know what they are? You should read and inform yourself, and then you could reason logically.”

“There may come a time for me to read even such books as those of which you speak, but that time is not yet. There is a wide difference between a man of mature years and a school-boy discussing these things. It is only while we walk in the way God has appointed, that we have the promise of his watchful care over us. It was to his own people that he gave his angels charge concerning them. If we go about in forbidden paths, we may expect, like lost sheep, to go astray.”

While these contentions were going on between these two, who, in spite of their disagreements, were very



warm friends, Howard, though the youngest member of the class, had worked his way up, until he stood third in a class of fifty-nine. Regardless of his rough clothes he had many friends. Milo, who had not the moral courage to acknowledge him at first, was now proud to claim him as an old friend. He felt heartily ashamed of having treated him so unkindly.

There were, in this college, two secret societies, to which many of the students belonged. The good president, Dr. James, and all the professors were much opposed to these organizations; but, as they were not forbidden by the laws of the college, they were powerless to prevent them. One of the leading members of one of these societies was Norman Thorp, the best student in the college. The president of the other one was Wilbur Norris.

While Howard was only the abused janitor, no one disturbed his *peculiar* views, on secret associations; but now, since he had risen above gentlemen in broadcloth, and stood almost ready to contend for the first honors of his class, he was worth initiating. So they were continually dogging his steps, determined that he should unite with them. Their praises were sung in his ears, until, if he knew nothing of their doings, he would have believed them harmless and innocent. Much controversy arose, in regard to the good and



evil effects of these societies in general. Each representative applauded the good done by his own society; Howard, meantime, maintaining, if so much good and no evil was done, why not make it public? If it will stand the day, why not bring it to the light? You say yourselves there is nothing secret except signs and minor points. These are so ridiculous you are ashamed to let God's light shine on them. The matter ran so high, that the Board interfered and desired the controversy to cease; so, for the present, the fire was smothered, but it was not put out, as we shall see some months hence.

In the midst of the trials and hardships through which Howard was passing, there came unwelcome news from home. His mother wrote of the sorrow Harry was causing them, by his waywardness and intemperance. "O God!" she wrote, "that I should live to see one of my sons a common drunkard."

"My poor brother," was the cry of Howard's heart, when he carried his trouble to a Throne of Grace, pleading for this brother, dearer to him than his own life. "O God! let this cup pass. Surely, Father, this trouble is greater than we can bear." He spent the greater part of that night in prayer. He felt there was a battle to fight and a victory to win, ere this new grief would flee away. He wrote a long letter to his



mother, and a tender, pleading one to Harry. Poor Harry! he wept over his brother's kind letter, and determined never to touch one drop of the vile liquor, but alas! misguided boy, he made this resolution in his own strength, soon to fail, when assailed by a new temptation. The mother wept and pleaded; the father scolded and frowned; Laura looked on, and tried to shame or coax; the little ones were frightened, and would hide away, when Harry came staggering home. But nothing seemed to do any good. For a while he would stay at home and try to do right, but let him meet one of his dissipated companions, and he forgot all his good resolutions.

One stormy evening in the latter part of March, Howard was handed a telegram bearing these words, "Little Frankie is dead! come home." Little Frankie! The baby! The dear little fellow! The light of the house gone, gone forever. In ten hours, he was with the stricken family. He found them weeping over the little white-robed form, beautiful in death. The story was soon told: a sudden attack of croup—a few hours of intense suffering—and the little one was at rest. Rest, rest, eternal rest!

"Oh, Howard," said the mother, as he stood gazing on the happy dead; "this is a hard stroke, but not the hardest we have to bear. Would to God that Harry was as safe as that dear child."



"Oh, brother," exclaimed Harry, entering the room and throwing his arms around Howard's neck; "my bad deeds have caused this trouble to fall upon us. Dear, dear Frankie! I cannot live without him. He was so sweet—so good."

"Harry, he is better off with Jesus. He is safer now. He will never give our parents trouble. He has finished the work God gave him to do. I would not have him back, much as we shall miss him."

Long the brothers talked over that little coffin, and many good promises did Harry make, only to break them when tempted again. He could not stand alone. The solemn prayer Howard put up for him, when they were alone with their dead, was not forgotten. It was the one *sad, sweet* memory, that followed him in all his wanderings, and kept him from sinking deeper into sin.

Back at school, Howard worked with a new will—partly to gain the time he had lost, and partly to keep out the remembrances of the sad scenes through which he had just passed. Sad as he felt about baby Frankie's death, he thought much more of poor Harry's fate. He had promised to forsake his evil ways, but there was no assurance of his reformation while he groped alone in his own strength. Many an hour, when all the world was hushed in slumber—



when no eye but the Omnipotent beheld—did this young disciple, on his bended knees, plead for the rescue of his fallen brother, who seemed a part of himself.

A few weeks after his return to school, he received a letter from his mother containing the following :

“How lonely is our home now ! We have lost four of our number from our fireside ; two by death, and one by intemperance. Harry is lost to us, I fear, and you are far away. How I miss dear little Frankie ! How I miss the patter of his little feet, the good-night kiss, the prattle of his little tongue, his sweet baby caress ! Oh, I miss him everywhere ! There are no torn pinafores to mend, no heelless little socks to darn, no toy-littered room to sweep, no finger-marks upon the window-pane. The little crib is empty now, and all is *too* still about the house. Yet after all the void and ache his loss has caused, I would not have him back. I would rather, much rather, endure this heartache than risk my baby’s future in this sorrow-stricken world. I feel I have two dear children to welcome me in heaven when I go. What shall I say of Harry ? The beautiful boy I used to be so proud to hear people admire. I had hoped that little Frankie’s death had not been in vain. Harry had seemed so thoughtful since ; but alas ! last night he came home worse intoxicated than ever before. Your father was very angry, and treated him very harshly. I believe but for my pleadings he would have turned him out in the cold. He says he will not endure this any longer. I feel sometimes as though my burden is greater than I can bear. It does seem there is no use in trying to reclaim Harry, but unkindness only drives him farther away. What a comfort you are, my son, in these dark and troublesome days ! How we long to have you with us again ! We are counting the days till



vacation, hoping that somehow your presence may yet save your brother."

These loving words from his mother were more precious to the young student than gold. An entry in his journal, not designed for any eyes but his own, shows his feelings:

"C——, PA.

"A letter from my dear mother speaks of Harry's downfall again. O Harry! my beautiful, loving brother! Will he—must he go down to the drunkard's hell? Would to God this drinking curse was wiped from the earth. How many once happy homes are to-day shrouded in darkness because the wine-cup has been there in its fury! Almost every criminal in the land was made such by the influence of *rum*. Why do the people not rise up and say, This evil shall be washed out, even if it takes blood to cleanse it. I *cannot*—*will not* give up my brother. I feel he will yet be snatched from this horrible thralldom. I can only pray, and leave the rest to God. In Jesus only is there help and strength. My precious mother! What troubles she has to bear! I almost feel that it is my duty to go home, and try to comfort the dear ones there. Her tender, loving words are more valued by me than all the praise of a false and fickle world. *Mother, your boy must be saved!*"

"If I had any faith in religion," remarked Wilbur Norris one day, "I would believe you to be a real Christian. You come nearer trying to live up to your profession than any one I ever knew."

"I am afraid, Wilbur, if you take me for an example, you will form a poor opinion of our holy religion."

"If all Christians were as consistent, I would think there was more reality in these mysterious subjects."



“You should not judge Christianity by its professors. If they do not live blameless lives, you need not despise their religion. The fault is in them, and not in the belief they express. Study the Holy Bible. Take Jesus for your pattern. Do not reject him because his followers lead inconsistent lives.”

“I do think Christians are the *most* inconsistent people in the world. Why, if I believed there was a heaven to win, and a hell to shun, I would make it the business of my life to prepare for the future. How many who say they believe in the Bible and a world to come make it the very last thing in their lives to be governed by its precepts, or to think of its promises and threatenings! Their business must have their first attention; then, if there is time, they give a few thoughts to their soul's great interest. I tell you they do not believe what they say they do, else heaven would be the one great theme of their lives, instead of being taken up occasionally, and handled as a costly ornament too good for daily use. If they *believed* in their own professed faith, every one would be like the man of whom we have all read, who, coming to earth from one of the starry abodes, and hearing of the fall and redemption of man, was astonished to find that the people did not quit all their business and pleasure pursuits and get ready for the other world. He could



scarcely find a minister who could take time from his daily rounds to direct him the way to heaven. Think you, if I believed all these fables, I would rest until every being of my acquaintance was awakened from sleep, and was prepared to escape from the burning pit, just ready to open beneath him at any moment?"

"I know full well we do not live as we should. We injure our cause greatly by our careless lives; but you acknowledge the Bible to be pure and blameless."

"As a work of literary beauty it cannot be surpassed; but that it is more than a mere fairy-tale, I cannot admit."

"Take it away, and what will become of all our free institutions? What will become of society at large? The Bible is the very foundation of *all* the privileges we enjoy. Take it away, take away our Sabbaths and our sanctuaries, and how long would our homes, our lives, or our property be secure? It is the teaching of Christianity, the great theme of the Bible, and that alone that gives to us our safety. Let Infidelity once take possession of our land; where then would be our peace at home, and peace abroad?"

"I admit its morality is the purest and holiest taught."

"Not only the purest and holiest, but the only



morality: the basis on which all other morality is founded. Would you not yourself feel safer under the roof of a praying man, than under that of an infidel, supposing you were cast on the tender mercies of either?"

"This I cannot deny. I cannot help but acknowledge that the Bible is an excellent rule as a guide to happiness in this life. Its golden rule is perfect."

"If it is so powerful in preparing us for happiness in this life, why not in the life which is to come? Why can you not go a little farther and see it opening the doors of the New Jerusalem, and admitting the blood-washed throng into the rest prepared for the people of God? Oh, Wilbur, I have a sister and brother in that happy land, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. I would not believe that death is an eternal sleep, else what hope of again beholding those dear ones who have passed to the other world? 'We shall know each other there,' and what a happy meeting that will be!"

"Would to God I had your faith; but I have lost faith in everything—in myself as well. I cannot understand this strange life.

"What is this life? and what its aim?

What is its end to be?

Where do we go, or whence we came—

Say, who can answer me?



Is this the first—the opening strife?

Or, have I lived before?

Is death the germ of other life

Beyond this mundane shore?

Perhaps the time may come at last

When I can read the whole:

The present volume and the *past*,

*That's written on my soul."*



## CHAPTER VI.

### SOWING THE WIND.

"The way of the transgressor is hard."

"Sometimes souls He loves are riven  
By tempests wild, and thus are driven  
Nearer the better land."

IT was with a sad yet happy heart that Howard turned his feet homeward at the close of the year. His remembrance of home was not the holiest: not from the lack of affection on the part of its members, but from a want of manifesting the tender courtesies of life.

The harsh method of the father had much to do with the gloom that ever pervaded that home. Cheerless as he expected to find the old homestead he longed to be there, to impart comfort to the weeping ones, and endeavor to rescue the fallen one. As he looked back over his life he could not but regret how little he had done towards making home bright and attractive. Now he felt the selfishness that had prompted him to read and study, when he might have been helping his



brothers and sisters to while away their tedious hours. How much he might have done towards keeping Harry out of the way of temptation! Now, alas! these precious moments were gone forever.

He did not rest many days, for the fields were white for the harvest, and his help was needed. How his heart ached when he looked upon the bloated face of his once beautiful brother! His complexion had lost its clearness, and his soft brown eyes their brilliancy. Day by day, as they worked side by side, they talked of everything, except the *one* thing nearest their hearts. Howard understood human nature too well to introduce the subject until a favorable opportunity arrived. At length Harry opened the subject himself, by asking:

"How is it, Howard, you never mention my downfall? Were you not aware that I have lost my reputation?"

"Not lost it, I hope, brother dear. I am very sorry, Harry, that you have got into bad company, which has led you astray; but I trust you have now shaken them off, and are fully determined to walk in the straight and narrow way, which is the only safe way."

"It is easier to talk of breaking loose from bad habits and associates than it is to do it. How often



have I tried and failed, until I think there is no use in trying any more! It is like a ball: once started to roll down hill, it must go—it cannot stop itself.”

“No, it cannot stop itself; but let a power sufficient be applied, and its progress will be arrested at once. So it is with us. When started down the hill of sin, nothing short of the power of Jesus can stay our speed and bring us back to the fold of God. He says, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ So, dear brother, cease your vain efforts in trying to extricate yourself. ‘Cast your burden on the Lord, for he careth for you.’”

“Do you believe he would help me now, when I cannot help myself, knowing I refused him when I was not so powerless?”

“Most assuredly he would. Every time is a time of need with us; but when we see our need, then it is we are ready for his help.”

“I fear it is too late now. Why did you not tell me this a year ago?”

“Why did I not? Why did I not? That is what I am continually asking myself. Why did I let these precious years go by, while I enjoyed my Master’s love, and did not make this love known to the dear ones about me? But now, Harry, the book of the past is sealed, and we cannot open it. No matter how



much we regret what is written against us, we cannot wipe it out. Our deeds we cannot undo; our words we cannot unsay. We can only pray God to wash out all our unworthiness in the blood of the Lamb. The future is ours, and we will be accountable to God for the way in which we improve or misimprove our privileges."

"Howard, you do not know how I long to give up my evil ways, but it seems I am bound with a chain which I cannot break. You do not know how I love the accursed thing. There are times when I would give the world for a drink of rum. How I wish every rum-seller's establishment was buried in its own ruins! But, alas! while there is rum, there will be the thirst for it. To you, who know nothing of its power, it is easy to talk of giving it up and leading a new life and so forth; but, to the drunkard, it is his all. There was a time when it would not have cost me an effort to leave it off, but the love of it grew on me so gradually, that I was not aware until I was bound hand and foot."

"There is but one way out of this thralldom, and that is through faith in Jesus. You cannot stand alone. Nor can I. I keep asking for help and strength hourly, and then fail."

"If I could only get away from my bad associates,



there might be some hope. It is so gloomy at home, I grow desperate and go out for relief. Then it is the tempter seizes me, and I am unable to withstand the terrible array against me. If I only had a happy home, I would be willing to try again."

"Have not you and I had something to do with making our home unhappy? Have we always been kind and pleasant, studying the happiness of others in preference to our own?"

"I do not see any chance of doing much. Father never allowed us the privilege of doing anything without his permission. I scarcely dare to think in his presence. He has been a tyrant, but he will not tyrannize over me much longer."

"Harry, Harry! remember you are speaking of your father."

"He has never been a father to me. I do not think he ever spoke one kind word to me in his life. Whatever sins are booked against him, he will not be chargeable with kindness overmuch to his family."

"You mistake him, Harry. I do not believe there lives a father who feels more deeply for his children than he does. I cannot deny the rough exterior, but underneath there lies a loving heart."

"Why don't he show it, then? You know as well as I do how unhappy we have always been. You cannot



forget how fearful we used to be in our stolen games. We knew if he caught us fooling away our time playing, even in childhood, we were sure to be punished. Many a time we have talked of his harshness, and were only too glad when business called him away for a few days."

"I do not approve of his severe training, but I am sure he feels more than that for which you give him credit. The death of little Carrie and Frankie brought out his love and tenderness."

"Why does he not show it by his kindness to the living?"

"I think he is much more considerate than he used to be. He is our father, and no matter how he treats us, we should do our duty towards him, and then we will not have to look back with regret when he is numbered with the dead. Do not let us talk longer on this subject. Suppose you come with me to college this fall."

"Go to college? What do you mean? Do you want to be disgraced with your drunken brother? You must be mad!"

"But you would not drink there. I will help you, and God will help you, if we ask him."

"How will I get money to go?"

"I will ask father. I think he will help you."



"And I am sure he will not. Why, there was nothing in the world to prevent him from assisting you, and yet he allowed you to go there and be a servant to others far beneath you. Not only this, but you had to *peddle* books to make enough to buy your *second-hand books* to keep up with your class and purchase a decent suit of clothes."

"No matter; better *peddle* books (as you are pleased to term my canvassing) than go in debt for them. Better to make fires, to sweep and dust, than to go through the world without an education. I feel that it is better for me to be obliged to work my own way, although not so pleasant; and if father cannot assist you, I think I can help myself and you too."

"Do you think I would go there and be dependent on you? I would like to go, to get away from home, but I will never go to be a dead weight on your hands. If I can get something to do, I think I might mend my way by being near you. I would like to have a good education, but it is not so much that I want now as help—help to save me from myself."

"We must try and make arrangements for you. If father will only consent to your going, I can arrange the rest. Where there is a will there is a way."

Howard did not feel well enough acquainted with his father to speak to him, but, as usual, went to him



through his mother. His answer was, "No ; he cannot go." Seeking Howard, he demanded that all such nonsense should be dropped. "Harry is not ready for college ; besides, what good would he accomplish there? He don't amount to anything in any place."

"I hope, if he was there a while, he would amount to something. He thinks, and I am of the same opinion, that his only hope lies in his getting away from his haunts of vice."

"Let him stay away from them, then. What need he go prowling around that low tavern? If it had not been for your mother's tears, I would have kicked him out long ago."

"He knows he is down here, and that knowledge will have a tendency to make him feel debased, and not try to regain his standing."

"Here is the place to live down his bad doings. He cannot fly from them. If he is too weak to go by that vile den of iniquity here, he will find another wherever he goes."

"If you thought this trip would be the means of saving him, you would be anxious to have him go?"

"Yes, if I thought so, which I do not. He will only disgrace you."

"I am willing to run the risk, if you will only consent for him to go. I think it will do him good."



"I tell you I will not spend a cent on him. Let him give up his bad doings, and when I find he has thoroughly reformed, I will feel like helping him."

"Well, will you not let me take him along? I will see that his way is paid without troubling you."

"I think you have enough to do to keep yourself, without a drunken sot depending on you. It would take all your earnings to keep him in whisky."

"Oh, don't, father—don't speak so," and the dark eyes fairly flashed.

"Don't call that precious scoundrel a drunkard? If you could see him reeling and muttering in his drunken fury you would not be so tender of his name."

"Kindness may accomplish much. Harshness does no good."

"Do not mention this subject to me again. You shall not take him away to disgrace you. Much more likely he would drag you down with him, than that you should raise him up."

"I hope you do not think I could ever be a drunkard."

"I do hope not, but I never expected Harry to turn out as he has done. 'Let him that standeth take heed, lest he fall.'"

"Forgive me, father. I am sorry I spoke as I did.



I am certainly no better than others, and I have to thank my Saviour alone that I am not a drunkard. I have not stood by my own strength."

Harry was very anxious to hear the decision in regard to his leaving home. Howard did not give him a positive answer, still hoping his father might relent after further consideration. He had several talks with him, but he was as determined as ever. Finally he commanded him to let the matter drop. So this cherished plan had to be abandoned. Harry was much cast down by the decision. That night he went to the village. As soon as Howard missed him he followed, but too late to prevent him from drinking one glass of the drunkard's poison. He found him in Dawson's tavern with several of his boon companions, who were making much of him, as he had been absent longer than usual. They sneered at Howard, and used every endeavor to keep Harry with them; but, after some persuasion, he consented to go home.

Howard succeeded in getting him to bed without his father's notice. Harry was much distressed when he awoke from his drunken slumber. He said he had no intention of drinking a drop when he entered the vile den, but was unable to resist the temptation when it was offered him. Howard tried to show him that



his sin lay in entering the place of the tempter. Harry promised to try once more to quit his evil habits; but, alas! for the strength that is weakness without God's help! In less than a week he was brought home worse intoxicated than ever before. His father's anger knew no bounds. He would have cast him out of doors, but Howard's timely interference and gentle remonstrance at last prevailed, and he was allowed one more trial. Harry did not awake till late the next day, and his terrible headache, that always followed his dissipation, prevented him from rising. Howard ministered to his wants, just as though he was not the cause of his own suffering. At first Harry was determined to run away to hide from all his shame and disgrace; but, after much persuasion on the part of Howard, he agreed to remain and brave the storm he knew was brewing. We will pass over the humiliating scene, when he was compelled to face the family. Suffice it to say he was put on probation once more. Howard made one more unsuccessful attempt to gain permission for Harry to accompany him to college.

Soon after this event Howard returned to his studies. Milo Lee was anxious to secure him for his room-mate this year, but Wilbur Norris had agreed to share his room at the close of the last term, and Milo had to bear his disappointment as best he could. He had not



forgotten his own unkindness one year ago. Now he felt heartily ashamed of his past conduct. About six weeks after the opening of the term Howard was surprised to receive a visit from Harry. His tale was soon told. After keeping from drinking for some time he again tasted and fell. His father could endure no more, and, regardless of the prayers of his mother and sisters, he was turned out to battle for himself—with the hard, cold world. He said :

“I have come to you, Howard, as to the only friend to whom I could turn. I knew you would give me good advice.”

“You must stay with me, Harry.”

“Stay with you? How in the world can I do that? I have not a cent of money.”

“You must enter college, and I will be responsible for your support.”

“Do you think I will burden you? Do you think your fallen brother will be any credit to you?”

“I wish to benefit you, brother dear, and your company will do me much good.”

“If I can work my own way I will gladly remain; but I must not be dependent on you.”

“Never mind; we will find some way to get along.”

Howard took another room so that Harry could be



with him. He made no explanations, except that his brother had joined him unexpectedly. He then made arrangements for Harry to enter college irregularly. There was a fund to assist needy students, in the hands of the college trustees, that he would not have touched for himself; but he now unhesitatingly applied for assistance for Harry, becoming responsible for the payment of it himself.

For a time Harry studied well, and seemed to enjoy himself. Howard wrote home informing his parents of what he had done. His father was very angry, and assured him of receiving no assistance from home, but his mother's tender letter of hopefulness and thanks was very precious.

Harry was doing so well, Howard felt amply repaid for all his trouble; but, alas! his hopes were doomed to bitter disappointment. One night the tempter came in the form of Addison Moore—the same student, it will be remembered, who had treated Howard so rudely one year before. Much to Howard's chagrin, he persuaded Harry to accompany him to a concert in the village, and the result was, he came home half intoxicated. From this time he neglected his books, and all Howard's pleadings and entreaties were in vain. Harry was either with Moore, or Moore spent his time in Harry's room. They were inseparable companions.



Howard used all his influence to break up this undesirable association, while at the same time Harry charged Howard with having taken an aversion to Moore without just cause, saying:

"The reason you don't like him is because he treated you shabbily."

Harry would often pretend that he had been in some of the students' rooms studying, when really he had been in Moore's room playing cards, drinking wine, and so forth, with some of Moore's chums. One night, when Howard came to seek for Harry, he found, when the door was opened, only three or four students, studying their lesson in Geometry. He did not know that, while Moore noiselessly unlocked the door, the cards had been shuffled into a drawer of the table, and the books opened at just the proper mark.

"Will you not walk in?" said the chief hypocrite.

"No, thank you. I came for Harry," was the cool reply.

"I will be there presently," said Harry. "I want to finish this theorem."

Howard went back feeling that, perhaps, he was too suspicious; but when, two hours later, Harry came in with the unmistakable smell of wine on his breath, Howard knew he had been duped. A few days after this, Moore had a cousin from the South come to



spend a few days with him. He was a professional gambler, and was not long in insinuating himself into the good graces of these young men, who had never yet played for money. This great friend of Moore's insisted on staking money—just a little at first, which he *allowed* the boys to win from him, in order to blind them. He allowed Harry to win ten dollars. This was again staked, and Harry lost. He was now determined to quit, but was urged on by the tempter. Again and again he continued to try “just once more,” in hopes of retrieving his loss. At last, after losing one hundred and fifty dollars, he could not be induced to try again. He was very angry, and accused the Southerner, justly, of taking advantage of his ignorance. He told him he could not pay what he had lost, as he had no funds.

“You must borrow it then,” said the gambler.

By much threatening, he succeeded in frightening the poor boy to try to borrow the amount.

Moore said he could not lend him the sum, for he was nearly out of money, but he thought he could procure it from John Baird, who he knew had received some money just that day. Harry went to see Baird, and by representing to him that Howard had sent him to procure one hundred and fifty dollars, for two or three days, he succeeded in obtaining it. He then



drank deeper, and was taken to his room dead-drunk. Howard was deeply hurt. He felt, indeed, that there was no use in trying to save him.

He spent the greater part of the night in weeping and prayer. In the morning Harry still slept. Howard had to attend to his duties, and quietly left the room. When, at the close of an hour, he returned, he found to his horror that Harry had gone. A note bearing only these words was left on the table:

“HOWARD: I was not sleeping when you went out. I am going away. After what has passed, I cannot stay. Do not blame me too much. I was only a tool in a villain's hands. Good-bye.”

Howard sat as one stupefied. The breakfast bell rang, and after waiting on the college bell to ring some minutes, the President sent one of the students to ring it, thinking strange Howard had forgotten the time. Recitation followed recitation, before he aroused himself. What to do, he knew not. He felt it would be useless to follow him. The whole story soon came to the surface; and Mr. Baird went to Howard to see if it was correct. Howard knew nothing about the money, but on going to some of Harry's associates, he learned the story was only too true. Mr. Baird was a poor man. This money he had earned by teaching, and had carefully saved it to pay his expenses at



college. He needed it immediately. Howard had the money he had drawn for Harry's support. This he gave to Mr. Baird, feeling that he must leave college, and try to obtain some work, in order to replace it as early as possible. He sought the President, Dr. James, related the whole story, and told him of his purpose. Dr. James sympathized deeply with him, but objected to his leaving the college.

"You need not pay that money until you are ready," said the doctor.

"I cannot use this money for a gambling debt, and not replace it soon."

"The debt was not contracted for yourself, Howard, and I am sure the Board will not expect its payment, until you can earn it, after leaving college."

"I cannot take it for this purpose."

"Then I will lend you the money to pay the Board, and I will wait until you can earn it," said Dr. James.

"I cannot rest with this bill unsettled. Besides life is uncertain, and I do not wish to leave this burden on any other person."

"Your father would attend to it in such an emergency."

"Father was opposed to my influencing Harry to enter college. He wrote, saying he would not be



responsible for any of his doings. I still hoped Harry would do better away from his old associates; but, as it has turned out, the end is worse than the beginning."

Dr. James finding the young student determined, undertook to assist him in finding a situation. After some delay, he succeeded in procuring a place, made vacant by the illness of a teacher, in the country, a few miles from C——. The salary was good, and he entered on his duties with a determination to excel, and he was successful not only as a teacher but also as a student. Far into the night, books were his company. Before leaving college he wrote to his father, making a statement of Harry's doings and his own intentions.

The father's answer was just what might have been expected—cold, harsh, unkind. He censured Howard unmercifully for the part he had taken, and washed his own hands from all that had transpired. Howard worked diligently, both in school and out. Not an hour did he take for recreation or sport. His only pleasure was in hard, stern duty. Four months he spent in the school-room, and when he returned to college in the spring, he found he had not only money enough to pay what he had borrowed, interest and all, but he had a nice little sum left, which enabled him to procure



books, and some other little things he needed. He had studied so closely, that he was allowed to enter his class and pass examination, just as though he had not been absent a day.



## CHAPTER VII.

### VACATION.

“Rest—blessed rest.”

HE had heard from Harry several times. He was in Indiana, sinning and repenting—going from bad to worse, much as he had done at home. He had written a very penitent letter to Howard soon after his flight, deploring his evil course, and promising to refund the money Howard would be obliged to pay to save him from justice. The session closed at last, and the tired, worn-out student sought his home, this time to rest, for he was not able to take his place in the harvest-field, as had been his custom. Too close application had left its mark. The dark eyes, usually so bright, now wore a languid, wearied expression, and the pale, handsome face showed a great contrast to the bright, beautiful one of former times. No wonder the parents were alarmed at the shadow of the handsome boy, who had gone out strong and active from among the green meadows of his healthful country home.



Much as he had changed, his parents had changed more. His father had grown gray and stooped ; his mother, sad and decrepid.

"If Harry could see the wrecks he has made, he would certainly make an effort to reform," remarked Laura.

"If he only would," replied Howard, "how small would be the sacrifice ! I could give up everything, if Harry would only do right."

"You have given up more now than most brothers would have done. I do not think God requires so much from you."

"What has any of us done, in comparison with what Christ has done for us ? We must not forget that we were wanderers from the fold of Christ. The gentle Shepherd did not forsake us when we stumbled by the way ; but, on the other hand, how much more tenderly did he lead us over rough places ! I believe God will yet hear our prayers, and bring Harry safely back into God's own kingdom. I cannot believe but that we will yet be a united family in heaven. He is the child of too many prayers to be lost."

"I used to pray for him, but now when I make the attempt, something chokes me, and I cannot help feeling that such prayer is in vain. I have almost given up in despair," answered Laura.



“Once I, too, felt so. When I found how he had betrayed my kindness, giving me stones for bread, I felt my hopes were crushed forever; but a brighter day dawned, and I heard the voice of Jesus in reply to the old inquiry, ‘How often shall I forgive my brother? Until seven times? Yea, I say unto you, not until seven times, but until seventy times seven.’ Now I can pray, ‘Father, in thy own time and way, not in mine, bring back my erring brother from the paths of sin, and set his feet on the Rock that is high and strong.’ I have felt for some years that our family needed chastisement. We have never lived as a family should live. There is not that love, kindness and charity manifested among us, that should characterize a true Christian home. We have been suffering family visitations, not only in the death of our loved ones, but more particularly in this great trial that is now humbling us in the dust. I feel that the rod will not be lifted until our selfish hearts are thoroughly purified, and we can say in all truthfulness, ‘Father, we have done wickedly: return to us, and teach us as little children our duty.’”



## CHAPTER VIII.

### WEDDING AND WINE.

"Bring flowers to deck the fair, young bride."

AND little, blue-eyed, fair-haired Goldie, the beauty of the family, was going to wed Squire Holland's only son, Ralph. Goldie, a mere child, scarcely sixteen years of age.

"I cannot believe it," said Howard; "she is too young."

"I will grow older," chimed in the sweet-voiced Goldie.

"Yes, but are you sure, dear sister, you love this man so well, that in the dark hours, as come they will, and come they must, you can still feel, I can endure all for his sake?"

"You take a very serious view of this step, brother. I do not count on dark hours. My life will be all honey-moon. To be sure, I love him—yes, better than I love myself, and that is saying a good deal. Besides, he is rich. Of course, I would not marry for



money alone, but I have no objections to it when there is love for a foundation. You don't know how supremely happy I am."

"Do not be so happy as to crowd Jesus out of your life. There is no real happiness without God's blessing."

"Well, Howard, I do think you *talk* more religion than any *preacher* I know. Your every-day life is full of this subject, just the same as your Sabbaths. Just now, brother, you must not trouble me with your *whims*. When I am older, I will think of death. Not for the bride this solemn dirge. Let the bells ring and joy beam in every eye! Keep woe afar!"

"Tell me, sister: does Ralph not love wine all too well?"

"He loves it as you do—anything you can use or let alone at pleasure. Nothing more. He never uses too much."

"There is always danger in the wine-cup. Every drunkard was once a moderate drinker. Do not trust to this frail bark. Look at Harry!"

"Harry is weak, but Ralph is strong. Besides, Ralph will do anything to please me."

"Then have him sign the pledge before you are married. He is honorable, and I am sure if he signs the pledge, he will faithfully keep it."



"I will not ask him to sign away his liberty. I have no objections to him taking a glass when he pleases. I would be ashamed if he could not control his appetite. I like to see a man have spirit, and be able to treat his friends, and at the same time keep his hand steady and his head clear. You are determined to lecture me to-day. I will see you at a more convenient season," and she tripped merrily out of the room, not knowing that the convenient season would never come.

The days wore away, and the nuptial hour drew near. Everything was prepared on a grand scale. The dinner was provided with every luxury; even wine graced the sideboard, much as Howard was opposed to it. He plead with Goldie to keep this poison from the feast, but all in vain.

"No one has a wedding-dinner without wine. I would not be different from others. The guests would think me mean."

"Look at the consequences, Goldie. You do not know what harm your countenancing this evil may do. As you value him whom you hold dear, banish it. Do not run this fearful risk."

"At your own wedding you may do as you please, but at mine permit me to use my own judgment."

Mr. Ashton said, "Howard, do not say anything



more on this subject. Goldie is leaving home, and her will shall be law on these small matters."

"It is her influence, father, I am thinking so much about. Where shall the end be?"

"Do not fear for me, Howard. When I am in my own house, wine shall grace my table at all times. When you honor me with your company, I will dispense with it for your sake," replied Goldie.

"It is not for myself—"

"Stop, stop, Howard, we've heard your views, but I say again, as I said before, Goldie shall decide this matter," and *she did*.

Wine flowed freely. Joy beamed in every eye. Goldie flitted here and there, the very personification of loveliness. Her sky was all sunshine. She was happy. Ralph was all her own. How proudly her eyes followed him! He was so noble! so bright! so grand! so everything—one could desire in a husband! Her own hand filled his wine-cup! She it was who drank his health! and insisted that he should drink, just one glass more, "to the success of their guests," but really to show Howard that Ralph was strong, and she was fearless. She did not observe his fiery eye and trembling hand! She did not know his step was unsteady, and his brain in a whirl! Others saw his danger, and more than Howard shuddered to see the



young wife thus leading the being she loved best on earth to his own destruction; thus putting into his hands the implements with which to bury all her own future happiness.

How unconsciously was she closing the doors and windows, which were intended to let in the bright sunshine of peace into the new home she was just entering. She kept thinking, "Dear heart! I cannot see, but I believe. The past was beautiful, but the future I can trust with thee!"

We have seen the beginning; we shall also see the end.



## CHAPTER IX.

### WALKING OVER SLIPPERY PLACES.

"Thou art where billows foam,  
Thou art where music melts upon the air,  
Thou art around us in our peaceful homes,  
And the world calls us forth and thou art there."

"In a moment suddenly, to ruin brought are they."

THE wedding and vacation both over, Howard found himself, invigorated by his rest, once more treading the old familiar paths of learning. Very unexpectedly he was appointed tutor, which enabled him to pay his expenses. An unusually large number of students were in attendance. The secret associations were using every effort to increase their numbers. Never had there been so much excitement, or electioneering, perhaps because there was an animated opposition with which to contend. Howard was actively engaged in attempting to suppress these organizations, while, on the other hand, Wilbur Norris was laboring, with even more zeal, for their up-building. These boys, whose friendship was like that of



Saul and Jonathan, seemed to have nothing else in common. The one—a skeptic, with no belief, no religion, no God. The other an earnest Christian endeavoring to do the duty nearest him.

With the opening of the winter term came Ira Lester, son of Judge Lester, one of the ablest lawyers of the State. The high position the father occupied, in connection with Ira's own charming address and witticism, soon made him a general favorite.

Both societies used every possible means to bait him, but half the session passed along before he was caught. Then he cast in his lot with the same society over which Wilbur Norris presided.

The night of his initiation came at last. Among other heathenish absurdities which they were obliged to practise was one of walking blindfolded three times around a certain tree. This tree stood near a precipice some thirty feet in descent. By some mischance the young man made a misstep and fell. When he arose, he was so bewildered that he took a step in the wrong direction. His guide screamed and attempted to grasp him, but alas! one moment too late! He fell headlong over the rocky precipice—down, down, down, into the abyss below. Then all was still. Wilbur Norris was the first to act, as he had been the first to lead. Descending the fearful declivity, they



beheld their victim with his brains dashed out; a moan, a cry, and all was over. Tenderly bearing their precious burden, they finally, after much difficulty, succeeded in reaching their awe-struck comrades.

What remorse filled their hearts when they beheld the mangled remains of their companion! All felt guilty, but the ringleaders, who had duped their unsuspecting victim into their coils, thought the brand of Cain was stamped upon them. Surely the blood of this young man would be required at their hands.

A controversy arose how to dispose of the matter. Some of the weak ones, including Addison Moore—who was always on the wrong side—were in favor of trying to cover up the crime, by representing the calamity as the merest accident, over which no one had control.

“We will tell the truth,” replied Wilbur. “We have killed him, and there shall be no shirking responsibilities.”

Messengers were despatched to the village to notify the proper authorities, while the rest of the sad company sat with bowed heads and troubled hearts waiting for the verdict.

There, in the solemn darkness of the forest, with their night's work before them, did many of them resolve to forsake at once, and forever, all secret organ-



izations. Some of these resolutions were faithfully kept and acted upon through life; while others, like the dews of morning, passed away as soon as the cloud overshadowing them was lifted. Soon members of the faculty were on the ground, viewing the solemn scene. The only words of reproof Dr. James uttered were :

“Boys, this is a terrible night’s work. May God not lay this sin to your charge!”

After the coroner’s jury had given its decision of “accidental death,” the procession moved sadly over the same road, passed so merrily but one short hour ago. This time the principal actor in the scene was borne in the arms of comrades, a poor, bruised, bleeding body. No mockery needed now! They have done their work. *Their victim has been initiated!* Truly, “there is but a step between us and death.”

Early in the morning the distracted father arrived. His only son—whom he thought in a school where all the tender care and watchfulness of home were given—to meet such a death! But could he cast blame on others? Was he not a master mason himself? and had he not gone through just such silly ceremonies?

“This shall end my connection with all such societies,” he said.

Would it not be strange if he had failed to keep this promise?



The funeral exercises were conducted in the college hall, which was filled to overflowing. The services were deeply impressive. Dr. James, after making several attempts to conduct the exercises, was obliged to call on the Rev. Mr. Jeffers, saying:

“My heart is too full for utterance.”

The good old minister, who had for so many years mourned with those that mourn, spoke from the words of the Psalmist, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that fear him.” How feelingly he described this tender sympathy of the dear Saviour, who wept at the grave of Lazarus! Every heart was touched, and eyes not used to weeping filled with tears. Then Dr. James offered prayer—such a prayer for help and light, for pity and comfort, for love and forgiveness, in this dark hour of trial.

The exercises over, the mangled face viewed for the last time, the solemn procession moved slowly to the mournful tolling of the bell, to meet the train that was to bear the precious dead to the stricken home. Soon the iron horse came thundering along, heedless of the gloom enveloping the place. Dr. James, Wilbur Norris, and Howard Ashton accompanied the bereaved father to his sorrow-burdened home. There, amid the wailings of the grief-stricken parents and distress of friends, this household idol was laid to rest, without



leaving behind one ray of hope to lighten the gloom around the grave. His father cried.

“If I only felt he was better off, I would not shed a tear, but, oh! to go down to the grave alone—with no hope, no Saviour, no heaven—this I cannot endure.

“Pity my woes, O God!

And touch my will with thy warm breath;

Put in my trembling hand thy rod,

That quickens death;

That my dead faith may feel thy sun,

And say thy will be done.’”

He was a good son, a kind brother, a moral young man, but not a Christian. The one thing needful was lacking.

“I was once a church-member,” said his father, “and I *hoped* a Christian. But of late years I have been engaged in politics, and have neglected my duty to my children as well as to myself and to my God. Oh! I could endure this great trial, if I had taught my son how to prepare to die, as well as how to prepare to live. Now I feel that, with all his beauty and talent, he is lost forever. I have no comfort in thinking that I can go to him.”

Dr. James tried to speak a word of comfort to the weeping father, but he would not be comforted. “We



cannot comfort those whom the Father refuseth to comfort." This poor family, with all their wealth and beautiful surroundings, had not even the privilege of looking on the face of their dead, so disfigured and loathsome had he become. But, even out of this darkness, a light grew to beckon them on to a better hereafter. At the grave of the departed, these parents vowed to live henceforth for the Lord, and to train their daughters for heaven. Leaving them with their God, we will return to the place from whence this great trouble arose.

Out of this death grew a great revival, by which many souls were brought to seek the Saviour. This death was the germ of many new lives. Every night the College Chapel was filled to overflowing, by the anxious seekers. The feeling was so intense that a day was set apart for special prayer, for the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Not only the students, but the whole town, came to seek rest and peace to their sin-burdened souls. The Spirit of God was moving in their midst, and all denominations and creeds were forgotten. The people came together only to worship God, and ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" Such an ingathering to the churches was never before known in that section. Verily the words of the Psalmist:



“In times of trouble, call on me,  
And I will answer thee,”

were never more literally fulfilled. The mouths of all scoffers were stopped, and all were compelled to admit that

“God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform.”

The students' prayer-meeting, still a power in this school of learning, dates its origin back to the gracious meetings of this time. God has brought good out of evil. The secret societies, too, by common consent, disbanded. The Board and Faculty of the college took the precaution to have its laws and regulations so changed, that these societies could not again exist in connection with it.

In this great reformation Wilbur Norris stood at the head. His philosophy and skepticism all vanished, in the hour when he needed their support. Infidelity could not exist, where the Spirit of God was striving. Only the Christian's religion could bring comfort, when there was *real* need.

“O Howard,” he said, “I feel as though the blood of Ira Lester would rise up in judgment against me.”

“You could not foresee this accident. Why are you to blame more than others who took part?”

“If I had only listened to your voice of warning; but, alas! it is too late now. Repentance cannot bring back the dead.”



"It was a fearful, but, nevertheless, an all-wise dispensation of Providence. God has overruled it for much good. We know not why this young friend was taken and we left. We only know, 'He doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, 'What doest thou?'"

"The scales have fallen from my eyes. God grant I may now lead a consistent life. My future is all changed. I always intended to enter the legal profession; and, since I entered college, as you know, I have ever looked forward to the time when I should enter my chosen profession. Now I feel like Paul. Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel of Christ. I tremble when I think of the awful chasm over which I stood. I surely have been snatched as a brand from the eternal burning: but what a price has been paid to open my eyes! The very life-blood of my young comrade has been poured out."

"Nothing less would suffice. God knows best. Do not grieve so much over what cannot be recalled, but look forward, and do the work your hands find to do.

"Let the dead past, bury the dead,  
Act, act in the living present,  
Heart within, and God o'er head."

As Howard felt his heart warming, more and more,



with the love of Jesus, the condition of his loved ones out of the ark of safety led him closer to the Throne of Grace. Once a week, regularly, every Saturday night, he wrote a long letter to Harry, pleading with him to flee to Jesus and forsake his evil ways. We quote from one letter :

“If you only could have been here, and seen poor Ira Lester, lying dead—he who had gone out, so short a time before, so full of life and hope—brought back a mangled corpse, and heard the poor father’s cries of anguish for his *lost* son, you would have felt the need of the Christian’s hope. In the time of death, nothing will answer, but a saving interest in the blood of the Redeemer. Come back here, Harry ; come back to one of our meetings, and I feel sure you will testify that it is good to be here. These blessed hours of prayer, how their memory will strengthen me in the dark hours that doubtless will come to me in the future !”

Harry’s letters were few and short ; but, from their drift, Howard feared that he was fast nearing infidelity. So burdened did he become with the charge of his brother’s soul, that time and again he presented Harry’s name for prayer, in the prayer-meetings. Such prayers were offered, as Howard felt sure would reach the Throne of God. One night, after receiving a very discouraging letter, he requested Wilbur to spend the whole night with him in pleading for Harry’s conversion. Morning looked in upon these devoted followers of the Lamb, still wrestling with God for the sal-



vation of a soul going far from God and heaven. A special hour each night was, henceforth, set apart by these dear friends, to be observed as hours of prayer for the wanderer's return. Why should mortals despair, while there is left this blessed privilege of prayer!

"Prayer moves the arm that moves the world."

"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

"For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."



## CHAPTER X.

### IN THE DEEP WATERS.

"God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways."

"I thought, but yesterday,  
My will was one with God's dear will;  
And that it would be sweet to say,

Whatever ill

My happy state should smite upon,  
Thy will, my God, be done.

"But I was weak and wrong,  
Both weak of soul and wrong in heart;  
And pride alone in me was strong,  
With cunning art  
To cheat me in the golden sun,  
To say, 'God's will be done!'"

HOWARD'S last year at college closed, leaving him in possession of the prize of one hundred dollars, which was awarded to the student who held the best grades during the whole college course.

He was much surprised, for he had not worked for this honor. So eventful had the year proved, that he



had almost lost sight of his standing, till he was chosen *Valedictorian* in a class of fifty-nine. He held his audience spell-bound while he delivered his "Farewell." Flowers, cheers and congratulations were showered upon him in abundance. He was acknowledged king of the day. Milo Lee remarked, "Three years ago I was ashamed of my acquaintance with you; now I am proud to have you acknowledge me. You have worked your way, and worked it well, surpassing us all, leaving many of us clear out of sight behind."

We cannot dwell on these bright, halcyon days—days ever to remain sunny islets in the sea of memory. Though they are past and gone, sweet is their memory.

Home again. The dear ones welcome him most gladly, his little sister singing, "Here the conquering hero comes." Goldie and Ralph, too, have come to do him homage—Goldie as sweet and gay as ever, outwardly, though a close observer could detect an undercurrent of unrest. It did not take Howard long to see that Ralph's love of strong drink was increasing gradually but surely. Laura told him that Ralph had been intoxicated on several occasions, although Goldie, if she knew it, never referred to it.

Howard had just been home a week, when he received a telegram from Iona, the village where Harry



was living, saying, "Harry is injured fatally. Come immediately." In a few hours he was traveling westward as fast as steam could carry him. Even the lightning express seemed to move too slowly. How impatient he grew, and how his prayers choked him, when he knew not whether his brother might not already be beyond the reach of prayer. He was with him at last, still living, but lying in a death-like stupor, from which the physician said he thought he would never awake. He was injured terribly about the head and back. There was no hope of recovery. The accident occurred in this way: Harry and a companion, both intoxicated, were thrown from a buggy, the horse having taken fright at a passing train. Johnny Marks escaped with a broken arm, but Harry had been dragged along over rough stones, and was insensible when picked up.

Howard tried to pray, but each time his soul would cry out, "There is no use; God has denied me this prayer."

Must he die in this condition? At first he tried to pray that his life might be spared; then that reason might be restored ere the life went out in darkness.

"O God!" he cried, "in wrath remember mercy. Take him not away in the midst of his days." And



then, finally, when day after day brought no change to the stricken boy—when the doctor said he was dying by inches, Howard's rebellious heart became humble, and he prayed earnestly, "If possible, let this cup pass; yet not my will, but thine, O God, be done." He could now look back and see that in all his prayers for this wanderer, he had prayed, "Lord, save my brother," instead of, "If thou wilt, Lord." He thought now his prayers had seemed too much like the form of command. Now, all must be left with God. If it was his will to remove this loved one in his wrath, he must submit without murmuring, even though it broke his heart. But, while life lasted, he still had the blessed privilege of prayer. The father and mother came at Howard's call, and ceased not to wrestle with God for the soul of their misguided son. Howard now felt the import of the words, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

"There is a time we know not when,  
A line we know not what,  
That marks the destiny between  
God's patience and his wrath.

"God's Spirit will not always strive  
With hardened, self-destroying man;  
Ye who persist his love to grieve  
May never hear his voice again."



Even with these truths before him, he could now say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Now, when friends had committed this case to God alone, with no human hope, he saw fit to let the sleeper wake. It was many days, however, before he was able to converse, or even think. But when he could speak, it was to ask for the prayers of the dear ones who stood around his bed—prayers for his soul, that it might be prepared for the death he felt was fast approaching. But it was not God's design to remove him at this time. He came slowly back to life; so slowly that it was impossible to note any change from day to day. He would lie with closed eyes, listening to some comforting passage of Scripture, or a short prayer on his behalf. When he was stronger, the story of his injury was told him, and how long he had lain in a stupor resembling death; how father, mother and brother had hastened to his bedside, and God had heard their prayers, as now there were hopes of a partial recovery.

He felt very thankful that he had been spared, and offered one more chance of repentance. How he trembled when he thought of what his condition would have been, had he been called to the judgment-bar of God with all his sins upon his head! Where, then, would have been his infidelity and vainglory?



Would they have covered him in the day his own righteousness was weighed in the balance and found wanting? It was some time before he could be persuaded that Jesus would receive such sinners as he.

“I have been so wicked, even denying the existence of the great God who was feeding and caring for me every moment of my miserable life. My sins are too great to expect help in the dark days that have come upon me.”

“If you have sinned much, he also has loved much. Doubtless God has a wise design in this affliction. It may be just to bring you back to Jesus. Do not mistrust him, brother, but come with all your sins, and lay them down at Jesus’ feet.”

“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
O Lamb of God, I come.”

He improved slowly, but his back grew no stronger, and by degrees it dawned upon him that he would never walk—that he would be a cripple for life.

“Oh! why did I not die? Why was I spared to drag out a miserable existence, to be a weight on others?”

“Brother, dear, do not repine. God knows what is best. ‘He afflicts not willingly.’ Infinitely better



never to walk one step, and even to suffer for a few years, than to be beyond the reach of repentance."

"Oh, yes; but then to be a burden to others—never to enjoy the pleasures of earth."

"You will be no burden," replied his father; "and everything that *can* be done *will* be done to make you happy."

"Oh, father, I do not deserve this kindness! I have brought all this trouble on myself. If I had only taken your advice and that of others, how differently I would be situated now! I have done so much evil; and now, when I have just been laying plans for the *good* I would accomplish in the future, to be deprived of the means, and cast a helpless, suffering cripple on the bounty of others. I cannot bear it!"

"I blame myself, Harry, much for your career. I see now, when it is too late, that I have not been tender, nor made home as happy as I might have done. I thought my ways were best, but I suffer none the less keenly now, when I see what a wreck I have made. Surely, 'whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.' Do not let us seek to know the cause of this dark providence. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God.' Things we cannot understand let us accept as coming from the all-wise Ruler, knowing that 'what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.' Per-



haps this is the very way that God has chosen for you, dear Harry, to glorify him most fully. We are always disappointed when we mark out our own way. It seems to be the will of God, so far as this world is concerned, that our longings are not satisfied, and that our hopes remain unfulfilled. May there not be a gracious significance in that thirst with which we thirst, and that hunger with which we hunger? Will not the fruition of the world to come be all the brighter by reason of these earthly disappointments and denials? We are always watching and waiting for ships which never come. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. It may be yours, dear Harry, to bring more glory to God by your suffering, than you could by an active service, battling for your King. 'He doeth all things well.' We must bear the cross, if we wear the crown. There is an old poem that truthfully says:

"They fought the battle, bore the cross,  
That truth might never suffer loss,  
But, like the tempest-cradled flower,  
Spring through the storm the martyr's dower,  
Souls that while beckoning the free,  
Sank like a lighthouse in the sea.  
But from their graves a spirit came,  
Uttering words of winged flame:

No cross, no crown.



“ ‘This be the motto of the brave,  
And this the watchword of the slave,  
The patriot’s, with the people’s scorn,  
The martyr’s, with his garland thorn ;  
Whoever seeks to win a name,  
Whoever toils for freedom’s fame,  
Whoever human tears would dry,  
Let this for ever be his cry—

No cross, no crown.’ ”

Many long, pleasant talks they had of the blessedness of that joy, that awaits the blood-redeemed in heaven. As the days wore away, and it became more and more certain to Harry that he would never walk again, that the injury to his spine was such as would render him a sufferer for life, his fiery will was subdued, and he was made “willing in the day of God’s power.” He stood the long, tedious trip heroically, reaching home very much exhausted, but quite cheerful. Here everything was done for his comfort. An easy-chair, that could be rolled around at will, was procured for him, and his parents, brother and sisters vied with each other in their kind attentions. The father was much changed ; from the tyrannical taskmaster, to the kind, tender parent. If, at times, his old roughness manifested him to be the same man, it was on some other member of the family that his displeasure fell. Never was Harry the subject



of his unkindness. The mother and sisters now moved about as human beings no longer under the iron foot of a slave-master.\* They could make a suggestion, or prepare a delicacy for the sick-room, without being called to account for acting without permission. On the whole, the home was much happier than ever before, regardless of the great trouble that had come upon it. When friends would come in and lament the calamity that had overtaken Harry, his quiet, simple faith assured them that he had wells of water from which to draw, of which they knew not. He would often speak of the goodness and long-suffering of God, who had sent this affliction upon him.

“I was a lost sheep going astray, but have now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul. Nothing less would do. I had warning after warning. My friends advised me, prayed for me. Death came and took two lambs from our fold. When cast out of my home for my evil doings, my brother took me in, fed me, and gave me all I could desire; but I turned from all, and sought the tempting cup. I drank; I fell, in spite of this same brother’s pleadings and prayers. After betraying his trust, and leaving him my gambling debts to pay out of his hard earnings, I left him, to sink more deeply into sin; to



scoff at all things good and pure; to deny that the same God who lives around us, in us, above us, had an existence. Was it not a mercy that God did not leave me to perish in my hardness, instead of compelling me to stop and think? I even rebelled against my lot and longed to die, but even here God was more merciful to me than I was to myself. He did not take me away in my sins, but blessed this affliction to my soul. It has been good for me that I was afflicted."

When asked if he was anxious to be restored to health, he replied:

"Not if it is God's will that I should suffer. I have no faith in my own strength. I might fall miserably, if I had the power. God's way is the best way. The dial takes shades, each points to the sun.

"The shades are many, the sunlight is one.

Life's sorrows still fluctuate; God's love does not,

And his love is unchanged when it changes our lot.'

"God is able of himself to make us happy. Once I thought I could never be happy in this condition—to be a cripple, dependent on others, and a constant sufferer. I thought this calamity the very worst thing that could befall me. Now I am happier than I ever was before. I believe that if God should take away everything from me, and yet give me himself, I would be supremely happy. These



days of affliction are my best days. When my days are filled with pain, and my sufferings are extremely severe, then God's promises are doubly precious. I feel as though I can truly say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He is all my salvation and all my desire.'"

Learning of the intemperate habits of Ralph, Goldie's husband, he talked one whole afternoon to him, trying to set before him what would probably be the end of his career.

"Dear Ralph, you do not realize the abyss that yawns beneath you. Look at me. What made me such a wreck? What twisted this form and withered these limbs, once so active? What but strong drink? What causes nearly all the crimes in the land? The answer comes back again and again—*strong drink*. You say you can quit drinking if you choose. Oh, Ralph! stop, stop before it is too late. Once I could have stopped, too; but there came a time when I could not. You say you are not afraid of becoming a confirmed drunkard, yet admit you love the taste of wine. This taste will grow on you, and ere you are aware, you will be bound hand and foot. You cannot drink moderately. You must be a total abstainer or a drunkard. Do not look angry. You admit you have taken too much on several occasions already. Oh, brother, stop and think; think of a heaven to gain and



a hell to shun; think of poor Goldie and the little babe you love so dearly! Do not curse them with your intemperate habits. Do not crush them with this monstrous viper you are hugging in your bosom, only to strangle you in the end. Cast it out! Sign the pledge! But do not sign it in your own strength, for if you do, you will surely fail. Seek and find strength from above, and all will be well. You think me an enthusiast, but I know something of the drunkard's hell. I know whereof I speak."

Ralph grew very angry, and told Harry he would not listen to any more such talk. Said he, "I do not intend to sign away my liberty. I can drink when I please, and let it alone when I please, as did my father before me. I am not the weak puppet for which you take me," and he arose and left in quite a passion.

It was but a short time after this conversation that there was a political meeting in the village, and Ralph became so badly intoxicated as to be unable to find his way home. Howard found him sitting on the doorstep of the old tavern. By much coaxing and a little forcing he succeeded in getting him home. He was met at the door by Goldie. She apologized for Ralph's boisterous language and rough manners by saying he had taken some quinine to break the chills that had been troubling him. Howard felt sorry for the child-



wife, who attempted to hide her grief under this false cloak. He would have spoken words of pity to her, but he plainly saw silence would best heal the wound she was trying to conceal. As the husband had fallen into a deep sleep which he rightly supposed would last till morning, and feeling that his presence was oppressive to his sister, he kindly took his leave. This was not the first nor the tenth time that Ralph had come home in this condition. Even before marriage he had frequently taken too much. At first Goldie did not understand his undue merriment, sound slumber and dreadful headaches. Slowly the truth dawned upon her. She had reasoned, begged and entreated him to leave off his evil ways, but he even denied being intoxicated—would always lay the blame on a severe cold, effects of medicine, or anything but whiskey. She had hoped when their little babe came, that its soft hand might be the means of leading the father back. But, alas! he had started on the wrong road, and no human power could stop him in his onward sweep to destruction. In the morning she spoke to him of his condition the previous night.

“I was not drunk. How could I have come home, if I had been in the condition you speak of?”

“You did not come home alone. Howard brought you.”



"Howard! What had he to say? What business had he coming home with me and lying to you?"

"He did not say a single word, but I know from his grieved look that he knew where the trouble lay."

"And so you told him you knew, too."

"No, indeed, Ralph, I was too much mortified. Oh, Ralph, if you just would quit drinking, we would be so happy. For baby May's sake, if not for mine, stop and consider."

"There was nothing wrong with me. If you do not quit troubling me, I will leave the country, and then, I suppose, I will have peace. I am tired of being watched all the time," and this great strong man went out, congratulating himself that he had shut Goldie's mouth at least.

For a while he avoided Howard, and he, seeing this, did not mention the matter, knowing how little effect Harry's words had made.

When the bright October days came round, Howard found himself entered as a theological student in the good old Seminary of Allegheny. The money he had received as a prize now became of practical use. This, augmented by a small gift from his father, carried him through his first winter. He thus had more time to devote to his studies than ever before, not being obliged to work to support himself, as he had done at college.



There was another great burden lifted from his mind—Harry's safety. He felt grateful to the good God who had answered his prayers for Harry's conversion—answered them most fearfully, not as he would have had them answered, but as God saw best and most fitting. At one time, Howard almost dreaded hearing from this brother; now his weekly letters were waited for impatiently. They were so full of cheerful resignation and joyful gratitude. Not a murmur or impatient word. He suffered, as if his sufferings were a blessed privilege. More and more, as the days went by, did he learn to sit at Jesus' feet, and count, not his sorrows, but his joys. The only thing that seemed to trouble him was Goldie's trials. He wrote:

"If she would only let us sympathize with her, it would be a comfort. But she keeps everything locked in her own bosom. Woman-like, she tries to hide the serpent that is gnawing at her heart. Ralph will make a sad ending, if a merciful Providence does not interfere. Dear brother, let us pray for him, as you did for me. I think your plan of carrying one or two constantly to the throne of God, an excellent one. I feel that I owe my conversion, under God, to your prayers. Many times have I been kept from sinking deeper in sin by the knowledge that you were praying for me. I used to wonder how you could spare so much time in prayer. Now it is my greatest delight. No matter how great my sufferings are, prayer acts as a charm, and brings relief. At least, I am strengthened to bear my burden, and look up, in faith, to my home on high, where there will be no more suffering, and 'where God



shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' In the darkest hours, the thought that there is no night there brings joyful comfort to my soul. O, blessed prayer!

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire  
Uttered or unexpressed ;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast."



## CHAPTER XI.

### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

"Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,  
Returning from his ways,  
While angels in their songs rejoice,  
And say, 'Behold he prays.'

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
The Christian's native air,  
His watch-word at the gate of death,  
He enters heaven with prayer."

IT was during the holidays, while Howard was home in vacation, that there was a grand wedding in the village. Dr. Rolb's daughter wedded a young merchant of New York, and all the best families in the neighborhood were there. Wine was set before the guests. It was not long till Howard observed that Ralph was drinking freely. He kindly took him aside, and told him he was attracting notice. Ralph only grew angry, and said he knew what he was doing, and could manage his own affairs. He drank deeper and deeper, and his hilarity became boisterous. Goldie was obliged to appeal to Howard for help, for she saw he



was annoying the guests. Through much persuasion, he was at length placed in the carriage, and Howard accompanied them home. Not a word was spoken during the drive, but Howard's quiet care for the comfort of his sister was assurance enough of his sympathy. After the now half-unconscious man was made comfortable, Goldie broke down with the exclamation :

“Howard, I can never, never see you again without feeling this disgrace. What must I do? Every person there saw and knew Ralph's condition. I heard Annie Barton whispering to her cousin, ‘I think if I was that fellow's wife, I would try to keep him out of sight.’ Oh! the misery of being a drunkard's wife. I wish I could die.”

“Oh, no, dear! He may yet be redeemed! Your prayers may yet be the means of bringing him back to the right path.”

She shook her head.

“If I had only taken your advice, and had him sign the pledge before we were married, then he would have done it, I believe. Having taken such a step, he would have been too honorable to go back. But no, I would not listen to you! I thought it manly to take a glass. I even would have wine at my wedding-feast! I sacrificed principle to pride, and now I must suffer the consequences.”



"There is yet hope. Do not distress yourself so with the past. You did not foresee these trials. With more knowledge of the world I feared the result of playing with the fire. Having seen the effects of intemperance so frequently, I have learned to dread it, as I would a deadly serpent; but, dear sister, you have my warmest sympathy. I do not blame you for the course you pursued. You did it for the best, and *now*, all we can do is to work and pray. God can take away the taste of rum, and give strength to resist it. Even Ralph may give it up."

"I fear that will never be. He loves it too well. For months after our marriage, I kept adding fuel to the flame already burning. I have sweetened his brandy and carried it to him, when he felt indisposed. I had an extra glass of wine ready for him when he came home cold and tired. This is one reason I feel so much worse. I look back and see what might have been. Remorse is a merciless tyrant."

"Do not look back, but look forward and upward. 'Forgetting those things which are behind, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' What you did, you did ignorantly."

"Indeed, I did. For a long time after we had been in our own home, I did not know this evil was coming upon us. I did not understand these



violent headaches, but attributed them to natural causes. I prepared for him dainties mixed with the very curse that was sapping away his very life-blood, and my hopes of all future happiness. I have kept my secret sacredly. I have guarded it as a miser guards his gold. Never have my lips breathed this great sorrow. Often, when my heart was breaking, have I forced a smile for the purpose of deceiving my nearest friends. Now, concealment is useless, my secret is out, and I must face this burning disgrace."

"Poor little sister! heroically have you shielded your husband! bravely have you carried your sorrow! But you have been mistaken, if you suppose your friends were not aware of the burden you were carrying. For months we have known it, and longed to help you, but your evident attempt to hide your trouble kept us from offering our sympathy."

"Does father, mother, and all, know this terrible shame?"

"Certainly they do. These things cannot be hidden."

"How they must despise poor Ralph!"

"Not at all. They pity him and you, you know not how much. Now that you need not conceal your trials, half the weight is lifted. You can come to us for help and sympathy. Blessed sympathy! how can the human heart exist without it! We have all been



praying for Ralph, that he may be turned from his evil course, and for you, that your trouble may be removed."

"Did any of you ever speak to Ralph?"

"Harry has had several talks with him. I have tried to introduce the subject to him, but he always evades it. To Harry, who has suffered in like manner, he will listen."

"He always denies having taken too much, when I speak to him. When you brought him home last fall, did you know he was under the influence of wine?"

"I did. That was why I brought him home. I saw he was not capable of coming alone."

"Why did you not speak when I tried to impose an untruth upon you?"

"I respected your secret, and could not bring myself to speak to you, although I felt it to be my duty to do so."

"Will you not try to influence Ralph now?"

"Certainly I will, dear sister, but do not hope that my influence will have any weight. Human help, without God's help, is very weakness. Prayer is our great stronghold."

"I have almost lost faith in prayer, and everything else."

"Do not, do not say so, sister. Do not harbor such thoughts."



"I used to try to pray, but of late I have grown hardened, I suppose. I cannot pray. My prayers are never answered."

"You must have faith in prayer, and you must not give up, if the answer does not come immediately. Keep on praying and trusting, and the answer will come, sooner or later. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not. In God's own good time and way he will come to your relief. When I was called to see Harry, and we all thought he was very near death, my soul rebelled against God's providence. I had prayed so much for his conversion, and felt so sure God would answer my requests, I felt unresigned when I saw him dying with his sins all upon his soul. How sinful it was to blame the merciful God for not hearing my prayer! I tried to pray for submission, but I could not for many days. When I could do so, I found I had been limiting God to send my answer in my own selfish way, and not in his own holy way. This very accident, that I so much deplored, was the power of God in rescuing him from the eternal burning."

"I know Harry claims to owe his reformation entirely to your prayers; but at what a cost were your prayers answered! Look at him—a poor, suffering, distorted cripple. What can he do? Of what use is he to the world?"



“What use, sister? He has already, through his suffering, done more than we *all together* could have done in our whole lives. Just look what a change his condition has produced on father. He is no longer the harsh, uncompromising man he formerly was, but has become a tender, loving father. Harry wants for nothing his love or power can provide. Is it not enough of joy for one lifetime, to be the means of so changing one soul, of making one home happy? We cannot estimate the good this dear afflicted brother is doing, in his silent, uncomplaining suffering. Besides, look at the happiness this stroke has brought to himself. Before he was as a lost sheep going astray, seeking rest and finding none; now, his bodily pain is nothing compared with the joyful anticipation of the unalloyed enjoyment of the life hereafter. Harry would not, this day, give up his hope of heaven, for the crown of the greatest monarch on earth. Dear sister, if you could only realize some of the Christian’s joys, how changed would be your feelings in regard to this and many other subjects!”

“If I could be happy, it would be worth while to try; but I have ever felt religion to be such a gloomy thing. When Carrie died, I thought I would try to be ready, when my appointed time should come, but these solemn thoughts soon wore away, and left me farther from the kingdom than ever.”



"It is now time to return and prepare for life as well as death. No matter how great the trials of the Christian, all will be well, for, 'underneath are the everlasting arms.'"

In the morning Howard undertook to talk to Ralph on the life he was leading. At first he tried to evade the naked truth, but Howard told him this was useless.

"I know what your condition was last night, and you do also. We need not waste words on the subject. I come to you, dear brother, not to triumph over you, but to warn you of your danger."

"If I *was* a little light-headed, I do not think I was the only one in a lively mood. I could name several very worthy young men, who were just as 'tipsy' as I was."

"So much the worse. If others give way to this weakness, so much more reason have you to take warning, and sail clear of the shore. You know not how and where you are drifting."

"Do you expect me just to give up all my pleasures, because I happen to take a drop too much?"

"If this is your only pleasure, I fear you are building on a slippery foundation. When once there is a taste for strong drink formed, there is no safety except in total abstinence."



"You must think me very weak, if you think I cannot take a dram without taking a gallon. My father always kept it, and drank when he chose. Who ever saw him the worse for using it?"

"That is the very rock on which you split. That your father has done so, is no proof that you can do the same. On the contrary, where one man can so trifle with edged tools and suffer no injury, ten will become maimed for life, or die violent deaths. Do not stand over this yawning abyss any longer. Sign the pledge, and give up strong drink forever."

"*Sign the pledge!* Do you suppose I cannot keep from drinking, just as well without writing my name on a bit of paper?"

"No, I am sure you cannot. A man will do many things, if there is no restraint laid upon him, that he would not do, if he had sworn to keep his word. Nor is this enough; even an oath we cannot keep, without help from the One who is higher than we. For Goldie and baby May's sake, as well as for your own, *think, act*. What is more to be pitied than the drunkard himself, is the drunkard's family. He not only destroys himself, body and soul, but he destroys the peace and happiness of those dependent on him. How often does he take the clothes from their backs, the food out of their mouths! What for? to purchase the poison with which to destroy himself and his victims."



"Stay! your picture is overdrawn. I guess my family will not come to want, while this fine home and these broad acres are mine."

"Many as fine homes as yours *have* been swallowed up in the wine-cup. You have started on a way that will carry you headlong to destruction, unless a merciful Providence interferes. Oh, stop, stop, and, with God's help, this very day, resolve never more to touch one drop of the accursed stuff. I will pray for you, and do you pray for yourself. Will you not, dear brother? Poor Goldie would be so happy. She has carried this burden alone, trying to shield you from her friends and the world, long after we all knew her sorrow."

"I know she has been faithful, but, Howard, I tell you in confidence that had she taken a firm position at the time of our marriage, I could easily have forsaken my cup. A few times before that I felt I had taken too much, and even then the fear was upon me that I might in time become a drunkard. Had she opposed my course then, I could have quit, but now it will be much harder—much harder."

"And every hour you delay quenching this thirst, the flame increases. Poor Goldie did not know over what a volcano she was walking. She knows it now, and her remorse only adds to her pain."



"I know it was no fault of hers. I had the taste formed in my boyhood. My father used to give me a portion when treating his friends. I must quit; you are right. I will try to keep from drinking any more."

"A good resolution, but do not expect to keep it in your own strength."

"I would be ashamed of myself, if I could not keep my own faith."

"We are all weak, erring mortals. None of us can stand alone. Come, sign the pledge just now, while you are ready."

"No! I would be the laughing-stock of the whole country. People would say he could not let whiskey alone without signing a pledge."

Howard went home, feeling thankful he had met with even so small success. He told Goldie, but told her in fear. "He cannot stand alone. Let us pray for him constantly."

His fears were well grounded, for, before his vacation was ended, he learned, to his sorrow, that Ralph's reformation was short-lived. It happened that there was a festival in the church in the village, and although there was certainly no wine there, yet there *was* at the old *tumble-down tavern* on the corner. Ralph got in company with some fast young men, who urged him



to take a glass. At first he refused, but when they laughed at his new-fangled notions, he took and drained not one, but several glasses. He could not stand ridicule. He was soon as boisterous as a drunken man could be, and it was not until late that Howard succeeded in getting him into his carriage to take him home. Goldie followed, with a face as white as marble. Howard entered the carriage, intending to drive them home, but Ralph seized the lines, and could not be persuaded to relinquish his hold. He was just enough intoxicated to make him feel capable of accomplishing anything. He urged his horses forward; onward, onward they flew, faster and faster. While the road was smooth, there was no danger to be apprehended, but suddenly turning into a rough part, the horses became unmanageable, and dashed forward at a fearful speed. Howard made another fruitless effort to get possession of the reins. They had proceeded but a short distance, until the carriage was thrown down an embankment, and completely demolished. The horses, fortunately breaking loose, continued their mad career. Howard was soon on his feet, examining the extent of the injuries received by the others. "Goldie is killed," was his first exclamation. Ralph, now thoroughly sobered, tried to rise, but found himself unable. He was soon released from his hampered



condition, when he found Goldie had only fainted. His own injuries, however, proved to be more serious. He could not move without great pain. It was soon discovered that his right ankle was dislocated. As they were near a farm-house, they had no difficulty in procuring a conveyance to take them home. As soon as they reached their habitation, a messenger was dispatched for a physician. The doctor, after examining his injuries, said, "You will have to lie in bed, my young friend, for some time, for your fast driving. Sometimes we gain more by driving slowly."

Ralph had never before been sick, and fretted much over his restraint. Howard talked very kindly to him, and urged him to sign the pledge, and look up for help to keep it. Harry, who had never left home, except once, when he was carried to church, now insisted on being taken to see Ralph, much to the increase of his own suffering.

He implored Ralph to take warning in time, and not wait until a worse trouble came upon him. "The similarity of the way you and I received our injury, is a startling coincidence, if nothing more. You ought to be thankful that you are not a cripple for life as I am."

He seemed very penitent, and said he would try to do better. This was not a difficult task, during the



weeks he was confined to the house; but, "as a dog returns to his vomit," so he returned to his evil ways. Sometimes weeks would elapse, during which he would not touch anything intoxicating. At other times he would drink daily. Goldie plead, coaxed and wept; but he seemed to go down faster, the more she tried to stay him up. To Harry she carried her sorrows. He had suffered in like manner, and she felt that he could understand her case the best; but, in all her sorrow, she looked not to the Source, whence she might expect help and comfort. Sometimes she would try to pray, or read a few verses in her Bible, but generally God was not in all her thoughts.

The long summer vacation was now at hand. Wilbur Norris, still a class-mate of Howard's, returned with him to spend a few weeks. Howard had opened a select school in the village. It was among the first days of Wilbur's stay, when he saw how much Harry would like to do something for the kingdom of the Redeemer, that it occurred to him to open a way. He soon succeeded in raising quite a nice-sized class of boys from the various potteries. They were to meet in Harry's room, every Sabbath afternoon, to study the Bible and hear it explained. This now was something new, and Harry went to work in earnest. Twice in the week he had them spend the evening with him,



He took such pains that they improved rapidly. One by one his class increased, until, when winter came, he had as many as his room would accommodate. The exercise of the Sabbath-school consisted of singing verses of Psalms, selected by the scholars—repeating verses of Scripture committed to memory—and a short prayer. After singing again, the lesson prepared was recited. Then there was a short time given for the boys to ask any questions they chose. They spent many happy hours together. And there is no doubt but that many of these poor, ignorant boys received their first impressions of God and heaven in that little, lowly room, far away from life's busy, noisy strife. And this poor cripple boy, sitting, day after day, in his lonely chair, or reclining on his weary couch, will have more stars in his crown of glory than many a world-applauded hero, who made the nations ring with the fame of his valor or eloquence. "He has done what he could."

How was Ralph prospering now? Through his bad management and evil habits, his property was slipping away from him. His fine farm had to be sold, and he was obliged to take a more humble home. He now bought a nice little cottage in town, and opened a dry-goods store. His friends all opposed this step, for they saw he would be nearer temptation.



He had a beautiful home, a lovely wife, and two darling babes—Willie, an infant of a few months, and little May, almost a year and a half old. She was a child of surpassing loveliness. Even in her babyhood, she had that wise look, which so often betokens a short stay on earth. The eyes of heaven's own blue, the alabaster complexion, the soft, silken curls of gold, the little rose-bud mouth, and the small dimpled chin, united with the unearthly purity which characterized her outward form, and sweetness of the soul, that shone in the baby face, made her the light not only of the parents' eyes, but every one who saw her was charmed with her beauty. The fond mother prided on dressing her in dainty garments, and watched to see people stop in passing and admire her great beauty.

"Goldie, I fear you are making an idol of this sweet child," said her father one day, after he had been watching her caresses for some time. "Take care, daughter, or God will take her from your embrace."

"Oh, father, I do not think mothers can love their babes too much. God gives them to us to love."

"Yes, but not to love more than we do himself. He has a right to the first place in our hearts. Is it not possible that you are letting this child fill the very best place in your heart?"

"I know I love her very dearly, but God would not be so cruel as to take away all I have on earth."



"Do not talk so, Goldie. You have other claims on your affection. Your husband, and that dear little babe, Willie. He is just as near to you as little angel May."

"Just as near, father, and just as dear. If I was asked this hour to give one of my jewels up, I could not make a choice; but May is so sweet and beautiful, I cannot help watching her: she seems so pure—too pure for earth."

"She is the most lovable child I ever beheld," said the grandfather, tossing her up. "Too lovely, I fear, to remain here long."

"Do not say that," said Ralph, coming in, and reaching for the child. "God does not place anything in this world too beautiful to remain in it. Our earth is very beautiful."

"But not to be compared to heaven," replied Harry, whom they all supposed was asleep, so quiet had he been lying. "We cannot love the earthly too much if we love the heavenly more. 'Set not your affection on things on the earth.'"

"Do not talk in that mournful strain, Harry. I cannot bear to think of little May being laid away in the cold and silent tomb. She is too sweet to die."

"Do not speak so, sister. What *could* be too sweet for heaven? She is a very wise child, and as lovely as



she is wise. Let us hope that God will, if he has not already done so, cleanse her in the blood of Jesus, and preserve her pure, until she is transplanted in the heavenly land."

So much bound up in this little child was the father, that hopes were entertained that she would be the means sent from above to draw that father heavenward. Many times it was her tiny hand kept him from seeking less holy companions.

During Howard's third winter at the Seminary, he was called out one fearful night to see a man in distress. This stranger proved to be no other person than Addison Moore, the very man who had given him so much anxiety on Harry's account. This man was now in jail, but we will let him tell his own story. In answer to Howard's inquiry, "How came you here?" he said:

"It is a long story. Sit down while I talk. Do not be afraid of these iron bars, and spectral walls. You are the person I have wronged above all others, and the last one to whom, it might be supposed, that I would turn in this darkest hour of my life; but, on the contrary, when I was thrown into this prison, you were the first and only one I thought of appealing to for help. My wicked companions, more wicked even than myself, forsook me and fled. I knew you



were in the city, and would lend me help, if in your power."

"To be sure, my friend, I will do all in my power for you ; but how came you here?"

"How came I here? Well may you ask. After the terrible night that Ira Lester met such a death, I determined to live a better life. Perhaps you remember I was among the converts that came out and were received into the church. I was in earnest then, but alas! I soon failed, and ere long I was worse than before I had professed religion. I have since been leading a very loose life. I came to this city on business for my uncle, but got into bad company, gambled, and got into a fight. I was arrested and fined, and here I am without one cent of money, for I lost all I had. My fine and expenses amount to thirty dollars. Will you go my security for this sum for a short time?"

Howard could not refuse, and in the morning the sum was paid, as the Mayor would not accept bail, and Moore walked forth a free man.

He spent an hour with Howard, making inquiries about Harry, who he supposed was dead, having heard of the accident, and thought it had been fatal. He expressed great relief when he learned Harry's life had been spared.



"I always felt that I was in a measure accountable for his death, as I was the cause of his leaving college. I am sorry to hear, however, that he is a constant sufferer. Life must be very gloomy to him, poor fellow."

"I wish you could see him. He is the happiest Christian I ever saw. He says his sufferings are sweet, when he thinks of the glory there is in store for him. Ah! his bright Christian experience is worth a lifetime of suffering. I reckon that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed."

"Oh! how I wish I could reach such a state of perfection, but 'all unprotected, lo, I stand,'" answered the young man.

"Jesus will not leave you *unprotected*, if you put your trust in him."

"I am so weak. I wish I could put my trust in One able to save, but I cannot. The more I try to do right, the deeper I sink in sin. I will never be anything but a poor, miserable drunkard. I often think society would be rid of a nuisance if I would end my useless life."

"Do not dare to take the life God has given you. Would you go before your Maker with such a sin upon your naked soul? For this sin there is no for-



giveness, for there is no repentance. Cling to the Cross, and cast such thoughts far from you. Pray to be delivered from them."

Here these two young men parted, never to meet again. Moore did not forget to send the money to Howard—the money that took him from his iron cell, and along with it came a nice present and many thanks. We are sorry to say this incident did not have a lasting effect on this misguided boy. He went on in his mad career, and several years afterward died a violent death while fleeing from the officers of justice. "The way of transgressors is hard."



## CHAPTER XII.

### GONE UP HIGHER.

“She is not dead, but sleepeth.”

“On the bosom of the Shepherd,  
In the realms of endless day,  
Rests our lamb, our loved, our treasure,  
Happy little bright-haired May.”

BABY MAY was dead! The golden sun streamed in at the half-closed window, and the little song-birds warbled their morning lays, but they waked her not—she was dead! Fold the little hands over the still heart; there is no more work for them to do! Close the eye-lids tenderly above the now dimmed eyes. No more will they smile lovingly upon you. She is dead! No more will the patter of little feet break the stillness of your dreams. No more will the little voice come in sweet accents to cheer your lonely moments! No more will the little form nestle in your bosom, warming your very heart! She is dead! Ah! no, fond father, weeping mother, she is not dead; she



is only sleeping! She has only gone up higher. Far above the starry sphere baby May yet lives, free from all suffering, pain and sorrow! Far above the reach of storms and tempests, behold your darling! Would you call her back to earth and weeping? Would you have her angel feet tread the thorny paths your feet have trod? "Not lost, but gone before." Would you have her pure, unsullied life stained with sin, and made vile like those around you? Could you be carried to heaven's choir, there to behold your child, and urge her to return, doubtless she would dip her little pinions in the river of life, and fly away to the tree in the midst of the Throne, and sing, "Unto him who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be praise, honor and glory forever."

There—*there* is no more sighing, no more pain, no more weary watching, no more sleepless nights, no more anxious days, no more heart-aches, no more sin-burdened souls, for "old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

However much we feel that our neighbors and friends should not grieve over the early-called, we cannot realize that in our own case God's ways are best; so it was with these parents. Little May's clothes caught fire, and although rescue was at hand, she was so badly burned that in twelve hours she breathed her last.



Not one of her beautiful hairs was singed, and her lovely face was not in the least disfigured. But her little breast and limbs were terribly burned. Her sufferings were great, but she bore them so patiently that it was no wonder the parents were overwhelmed with grief at this severe blow. To see the little one suffer, and feel that more constant care might have prevented the accident, was almost too much for human hearts to bear. The mother, in particular, laid all the blame on her own carelessness. No amount of reasoning could change her mind. She could not take the view that the accident was a providence sent by God, just as sickness and death are sent.

"If she had only taken sick and died, I could have become reconciled," she cried.

"No, sister," Howard answered; "if she had been taken sick, and you had been permitted to minister to her wants, and know that everything was done to save her life, you would have been just as loth to give her up as you are now. You would have felt that your trouble could not have been greater. Such weak creatures are we, that we ever think, could we carry some other burden than that appointed, we could endure it better. We make our own weak wisdom greater than that of the Omnipotent God, when we would have it other than God has willed.



“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace ;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

“His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour :  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain ;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.’”

“O Howard ! you know not a mother’s heart, when you say this blow is not harder to bear than sickness and death. There is remorse gnawing at my heart. I should have watched her better.”

“I know it would not have been so hard, could you have known this greater trouble ; but not knowing it, you would not have been any more willing to give your treasure up to God. My heart aches for you, dear sister. We all *feel* the death of this little one very much. She was so lovely, so angelic, so intelligent, far beyond her years ! We feel that God has taken the very choice lamb of the flock—the most rare flower of the garden, and we cannot now see why or wherefore. I know, too, that the mother’s sorrow is the deepest on



earth, and words to comfort are vain. You feel like Job, 'Miserable comforters are ye all.' In time peace will come, but just now the heart is torn and bleeding. Only Jesus knows how to heal a soul distressed. But do not, *do not* allow yourself to take the heavy weight of blaming yourself out of God's hands. He hath done it, we know not why, but what we know not now we shall know hereafter. You could not foresee this event, nor could I. Dangers beset us on the right hand and on the left. Thousands of accidents of which we never dream might befall us on all sides. In how many different ways does God take us out of the world, and from how many things that might cause our death does he protect us! In the Ninety-first Psalm—that psalm that has been my comfort through so many trials—we have so much said of God's watchful care, that we should never doubt his presence and providence. Let us take this blow as coming from God, knowing that it is the Father's hand that holds the rod, and 'Whosoever the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' There is some wise purpose in this affliction. Perhaps the conversion of a soul, or drawing father, mother or friends nearer heaven. Many a child who has just opened its eyes on earth, and then closed them forever, has accomplished more than hoary-headed Christians who



have spent a whole lifetime in God's service. Now, that you have a darling child in heaven to welcome you, is there not more to draw your affections toward that happy place?"

"Ralph says he cannot live without her. She had so much influence over him. He has not been drinking so much since there has been an angel in the house. I trusted, too, that it was she, who, as she grew older, would draw him from his evil course."

"The disciples of our Saviour said, 'We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel,' not knowing that his death was the crowning act of the great redemption they so much desired. So it may be in your case, dear sister. As little May has on earth been the magnet drawing him homeward, so may she still be in her home above, drawing him *heavenward*. 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father.' Are ye not of more value than many sparrows? Has little May passed so suddenly out of the present life without his care?"

"I am beginning to see that God's hand was in it all, and I trust in time to be able to say, 'God's will, not mine, be done.' 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!' I know baby May is happy. I know she will never be called to suffer as I have suffered. I know, too, she



would not return to earth, after having once tasted the joys of heaven; but I am so selfish, I would have her back. I miss her so much, and will miss her as the days go by. Everything will remind me of her. Her toys and playthings lying just where she left them. Poor little Willie misses her, too. He asked me this morning what made sister sleep so long. Poor little fellow; he cannot understand that many a morning will pass, ere he will hear her loving voice. 'So He giveth his beloved sleep.'"

"Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,  
The reaper came that day;  
An angel visited the green earth  
And took that flower away."

Friends came to mingle their tears with those of the bereaved family, when little May was laid to rest. Mr. Brown, who had been the friend and counsellor of the family in all their troubles, now spoke comforting words from the tender text, "She is not dead, but sleepeth."

"Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep,  
From which none ever wakes to weep."

The last look was taken—the coffin was closed, and the clods rattled on the lid, just as they had done hundreds of times before, and will continue to do, until the end of time. Back to the lonely house where everything



serves to remind them of the loved and lost, the sorrowing parents returned. The little garments, now no longer needed, are folded and laid carefully away. The little half-worn shoes and red stockings, those she had on when she was burned, are laid in the best place in her own little drawer. The playthings, too, now sacred in the eyes of fond affection, find a place with the other treasures. No place is too good for the relics of little bright-haired May. The tears of love will water the roses on her grave. The winds will blow, and the storms will beat over her resting-place, but they cannot wake the little sleeper. She heeds not the sunshine, the birds, or the flowers! To her, night and day are the same. Dream on, little sleeper! how much of life's sorrow and suffering you have escaped! How many years of joy and glory you have gained! Your victory is won, without the battle! Your crown is sure, without struggling with earth's storms and tempests.

What a void the death of this little one, only three years old, left in the hearts of her sorrowing friends! Doubtless this sorrow was for the best, but the parents' hearts were too sore to heed it. So we all feel when trouble overtakes us. We cannot realize that our great trials are all for the best—at least not just at the present. Light comes to us sooner or later, but



just now we do not feel able to bear it ; our eyes are heavy with weeping, and the light hurts them ; we beg to stay in the dark. This is the human side. There is a divine side. There is a trust so complete that it never wavers, even in the darkest hours. There is a faith so sublime it forgets to reason ; so far-reaching, it ends only in heaven. With this faith, this trust, comes a submission that knows no will but that of the Master's—that never murmurs, never complains—that cries, "Lead thou me on ; one step's enough for me."

"We must get very close to heaven, if we would be above the clouds ; if we would dwell in eternal sunshine."

It seems to be only through the furnace of affliction that this high standard of earth-life is to be attained. There is so much of this world's dross in every heart that only *fire* can purify. Without these trials, that are continually drawing us to the skies, our lives would be barren and bare. The Master would come seeking fruit, and find only leaves.

"Nothing but leaves,  
No garnered sheaves  
Of life's fair, ripened grain ;  
Words, idle words, for earnest deeds ;  
We sow our seeds—lo ! tares and weeds ;  
We reap, with toil and pain,  
*Nothing but leaves !*"



## CHAPTER XIII.

### CLOUDS THICKEN.

“When whiskey is in, wit is out.”

TWO years have passed since they laid little May among the daisies. The grass is now green on her grave, but the bouquet of flowers, kept there by the hand of affection, is never allowed to fade when flowers are to be had. A little marble cradle and slab mark her resting-place; but the loving mother's heart needs this not to know where her cherished dead lies. Another little girl now fills a place, but not the place of little May. Little Helen is a sweet babe, with large, mournful, brown eyes and curly hair, but she is like other children, more earthly than was the first-born. The death of this little one was the life of the mother, for from this time she dated her new life of faith. The great grief that first overwhelmed her gave way by degrees to a true reconciliation to God's way of dealing with her. The God of her babe became a very present help in time of trouble. As the days went by, she



prayed and hoped that the seeming reformation of her husband might be true and permanent. Many anxious eyes were upon him; many earnest prayers were put up in his behalf, and many faithful talks did friends now have with him. For a while all went well, but alas! he tasted, and tasting fell. He drank to drown his sorrow, and then drank to hide his disgrace. He drank deeper than ever before. His business was neglected, his customers forsook him, and ruin stared him in the face. He was obliged to mortgage his property, and creditors seized his goods. Now he was scarcely ever sober. Finally he went to Pittsburgh, for the purpose of settling some bills there. When he did not return at the time appointed, his friends became very anxious about him. Several days passed, and yet he did not come. Goldie became so distressed, and fearing he had been dealt with foully, persuaded his own father to go in search of him. On reaching the city, he found he had lifted the notes, paying the money. He found a trace of him at the station, where an acquaintance had met him very much intoxicated. Nothing further could the father learn, although he spent two whole days in the search. He had to return to the distracted wife with *no news* of the missing one. This was the hardest blow that ever fell yet. All her former trouble, even the death of her



child, paled before this terrible stroke. That was sorrow for the dead ; this for the living. She loved her husband devotedly, in spite of all his faults, and now what could she think ? Had he gone off and left her ? or was he lying sick and helpless, unable to return, with no one to care for him ? Perhaps in some moment of delirium he had met a violent death. Her only support now was God. Had he not been her refuge, she surely would have fainted beneath her heavy burden. Friends came to her with words of sympathy, but she heard them not ; even her little children failed to arouse her. In a few weeks word was received that he had been seen in Wheeling, supposed to have been looking for a situation. Now that he was not dead, she felt in some measure relieved ; but oh ! why did he leave her thus ? What had she done to cause him to act so cruelly ? Some would try to console her by telling her she was so much better off without him. But he was her husband still. When others blamed, she pitied. She felt sure he had been enticed away, for he had never abused her, only as intemperance made him careless and improvident. Creditors now rushed in and took what little they had ; even their furniture had to go.

Goldie took her little ones and went back to her father's house, which she had left just six years before,



the happy bride of a wealthy husband. A long course of sickness followed. Much of the time she was mercifully unconscious. At first the old doctor said she must die; but trouble never kills, and after several weeks she was again able to walk around, still not her former self.

Howard caused carefully worded advertisements to be inserted in the daily papers, thus hoping to hear something of the fugitive, but all in vain. They had almost given up ever hearing from him again, when one day, about four months after his mysterious disappearance, Goldie received a letter in his well-known handwriting. She tremblingly opened it, and learned of his wanderings. He stated that he had spent in drink all the money he had left after discharging his debts. He took a ticket for home, but, being intoxicated, fell asleep, and was carried past the station. He had some recollection of being put off the train, because he had not money to pay his fare.

When he came to his senses, he found himself a wanderer in the city of Wheeling, without friends or money. His thoughts then were to find work and travel on to the West. He was ashamed to return home, and he only thought of getting farther and farther away, hoping his friends at home would think him dead. He succeeded in working his way on a



boat to Louisville. He there found work and good wages, which he spent as fast as he earned them, trying to drown his shame and loneliness in the flowing bowl. Of late his yearnings for home and friends, for wife and children, had become so unendurable, that he had determined to write to Goldie, and throw himself on her mercy. Could she forgive him, and permit him to return? He promised he would sign the pledge and quit drinking—would do anything, if she would only trust him again. Goldie was almost beside herself with joy. Ralph was coming home, never to drink again. She could scarcely wait till her letter would reach him. In fancy she watched him reading her tender, loving words, telling him of her suffering and anxiety on his account, and how happy she would be when he came back. She wondered why everybody was not rejoicing with her. Her father was opposed to her leaving home again. He had no faith in Ralph's reformation. He thought he should be put on probation a while at least. All the gold in the world could not have hired her to reproach the husband who had so shamefully treated her. She was his wife, and if *she* could not forgive and forget, who could? So he came, and was welcomed by all. Goldie could not do enough for his comfort. He was very humble and penitent, and made many fair promises. He rented a small house,



and, with his father's help, furnished it plainly. He secured a place as clerk in Mr. Tompkins' store at a small salary. He signed the pledge and went regularly to church. For a while his friends were gratified. His evenings were spent at home, cultivating his garden, training vines, and doing many other little chores, which he found needed his care.

It was in the latter part of October, several months after his return, that the peace of this little family was again broken. Goldie waited her dainty supper a half-hour, an hour, two hours, but still the one she looked for did not come. Willie was sent in search of him, but he could not be found. What a nameless dread settled down in the young wife's heart! Could he again have sought the wine-cup? Certainly not. He must have stepped into some friend's house to talk, or take tea. But even as she said this her heart misgave her, and when a half-hour later he came in with a flushed face and fiery eye, she knew too well that the tempter had been successfully at work. He played with the children, and tried to hide his condition—said he had met a friend, and was a little behind time for tea. Goldie's quiet, tearful face told him that she was well aware of what had detained him. He had indeed met an old friend, who proved to be an enemy; for with his many soft words, he induced him



to take a dram, and so break his oath and his wife's heart with one glass of rum. Gently the poor wife expostulated with him, begging for his own sake, for hers, and for the children's, to renew his pledge, and with God's help, try again. This he would not do. Having broken his pledge, he would not sign again. Having given way once, it was easy to do so again. He did not drink constantly, but every little while he came home sufficiently under the influence of strong drink to become cross and irritable.

His evenings again were spent away from home, and if he attended church, it was only occasionally. Friends remonstrated with him, but all in vain. Temptation, as a strong man armed, had taken hold of him, and was dragging him headlong to destruction.

Let us turn for a while to more pleasant subjects. We will leave poor Goldie sighing, as she repeats, "My hopes are vanished. I have nothing to be thankful for."

"Ah, no! we forget our thanksgiving,  
Our praises are feeble and few,  
When the garner and cruse are exhausted  
Our gleanings have failed to renew!  
When the wind that hath blown us ill-fortune  
Wafts our neighbor's rich ship to the shore,  
We fail for *his* gains to be thankful,  
And only *our* losses deplore!



"It is well when the harvest is over ;  
It is well, when the vintage is done,  
To thank the dear Lord of the vineyard  
For the shadow as well as the sun !  
For the winter that follows the autumn,  
With tempest, and rigor, and night,  
When we sit in the blackness of darkness,  
And remember the blessing of light !"



## CHAPTER XIV.

### EDUCATION COMPLETED.

"Go, work to-day in my vineyard."

A YEAR before the events recorded in our last chapter, Laura Ashton had become the wife of Wilbur Norris, Howard's great friend. A beautiful boy, named Harry, after the much-loved brother, now occupied a place in the household. Though only a few weeks old, Wilbur supposed him to be a most remarkable boy.

Wilbur was now pastor of a small Mission Church in Philadelphia. Though few in number, they were an earnest people, and with a man like their new pastor to lead, they bid fair to become a great power in the city. No labor was too great for Wilbur, if he felt sure that good would result from his efforts. He had an excellent companion in Laura. She was not only a model wife and mother, but an excellent member of society, and a woman who had moral courage to do her duty, at all times, and under all circumstances.

Harry's health had not improved in the passing



years. Of late, his sufferings were much increased. His face, though pale and thin, bore that look of sweet resignation so seldom seen on earth. Often, now, he was unable to leave his bed for days together. His class, during these weary days of pain, would come as usual, and read each a few verses to the invalid. Through his instrumentality, his class had grown to be quite a large Sabbath-school, and had to be transferred to the church. His first class clung to him. They loved him very dearly. Many a little thing they denied themselves, in order to bring something to their dear teacher. An orange, an apple, a flower, anything they thought he would appreciate. Had not he done much for them? He had taken them in their ignorance, and made them respectable members of society. Nor was this the only thing he had done for them. He had taught them the story of the Cross, and more than one of them had found the Saviour, and were now rejoicing in that Saviour's smiles.

Some of these very boys could not read, when they first entered his class. They brought others, who never went to church or school; either because they were too indolent, or too ignorant. Mr. Brown often remarked, that Harry had done more for the place, than all the ministers combined. He said no matter what trouble, anxiety, or distress of mind he was in,



he was always sure of the prayers of this young disciple. He was consulted both by the young and old, rich and poor, high and low. "None knew him but to love." If he was deprived of much pleasure, he yet had a great deal to make him happy. We will quote from a letter written to his twin-brother, just when he had completed his course:

"Twenty years ago, or even ten, who would have thought that our lives would have been so divided? Twin-brothers. One to go forth to proclaim the everlasting gospel to perishing sinners, and to lead an active, useful life, and enjoy the society of the good and pure: The other to lie on his bed of pain, accomplishing so little for his Master, because every effort is made at the cost of his own suffering. Do not think I am complaining of my lot, or finding fault with that merciful Providence, who sent this chastisement upon me, to save me from myself—to save me from the drunkard's hell. On the contrary, I bless his great name, who did not cast me off entirely. Still, I cannot but think, how different my life might have been, had I lived according to the light and opportunity afforded me. Why did I not start fair in life, and keep pace with you? I cannot help regretting my sinful, wicked course. But I try to forget the past, as it cannot be recalled; and I know it is wrong to waste time speculating on what might have been. So far as my own happiness is concerned, I do not think I could be happier, were I enjoying perfect health. This wondrous love of Jesus! When I think of all he *has* done, and is still doing for me, I wonder I cannot persuade the whole world to come and accept and enjoy this great salvation. I would not exchange places with the greatest monarch on earth. . . .



"My crown, I know, will not fade when all earthly crowns and diadems crumble into dust. I do not desire that God would lift his rod from me, for fear I might lose some of the joys and comforts which I feel is a foretaste of heaven. My only wish is to do more for Jesus. So many are perishing around us, and so little is being done, to bring sinners home to God. Methinks, the minister of God, who faithfully does his duty, will wear the brightest stars in his 'crown of glory.'

"You, brother, are just entering on your life's work. What a glorious future is before you! The world is ready for the harvest, and God's servants are few. Work and pray, for your responsibility is great. Do not get discouraged, for even *one* soul is worth the whole world; but, in your zeal, do not over-work yourself. So many young ministers, when they first begin their labors, neglect their health and are soon disabled, and obliged by sickness to keep their rooms. Or, perhaps, death calls them from a place in which they are needed very much. A useful life needs to be a healthy one.

"That you may have much success in your calling and win many souls to Christ, and be afforded a joyful entrance into that home, 'not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' and there receive the welcome plaudit, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' is the fervent, heartfelt prayer of your brother."



## CHAPTER XV.

### PASTORAL WORK.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

"Though his wise and loving purpose,  
Clearly yet thou mayst not see,  
Still believe with faith unshaken,  
All will work for good to thee.  
Therefore, when thy way is gloomy,  
And thy eyes with tears are dim,  
Straight to God, thy Father, hastening,  
Tell thy sorrow all to him."

HOWARD had completed his course, and was now settled over a thriving congregation, in the western part of Ohio. As there was strife among the members of this church, they had been without a pastor for several years. The call extended to the young minister was not so unanimous as he would have desired, but there was no decided opposition. Two elements were striving for mastery. The feud had existed for many years. The last pastor had left the field on this account. Howard scarcely knew his duty under the circumstances. Elder Carson, one of



those good, unselfish men, who have the church's best interest at heart, said to him, the evening after his ordination, "My son, you have this day taken upon you vows that you will find hard to fulfill. You will find strifes and backbitings—many trying to rule; but do not be discouraged. That very Forty-sixth Psalm, which we sung to-day, is full of precious promises, in all times of trouble:

"God is our refuge, and our strength,  
In straits, a present aid;  
Therefore, although the earth remove,  
We will *not* be afraid."

"With God as a refuge you need not fear what man can do. Do not try to please any but God, and you will succeed. These bickerings will melt away, and all will be forgotten in the love of our dear Saviour."

The first day after settlement, he preached from the words, "I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me." He felt his subject, and spoke with great earnestness. He was a lover of good music, and the poor singing in his congregation annoyed him. He proposed to hold meetings, once a week, in order to practice good church music. These meetings were usually well attended. All the young people took an active interest in them. Soon a great improvement



was noticeable. Some twenty of the best singers were selected as leaders, and the Songs of Zion, that had been the sport of many outsiders, were now sung with melody as well as with the understanding.

"I don't like this singing business," said old Deacon Biggs. "There is a little too much 'tomfoolery' about it for me."

"Why," replied Howard, "is there not quite an improvement in the music?"

"Too much—too much! It is more like a theatre than a church. Why, all the young folks in town are coming to church, just to hear the singing."

"We want to make our church attractive. We want the young folks, and the old, too, to come in and worship with us."

"I have no objection to their coming, just to worship; but I do not like to see them there to listen to the music."

"Singing is a part—a *very important* part—in the service of God. I believe there are as many conversions from good singing as good praying and preaching. If they only come to sing, they remain to pray, and may not a word sown in weakness 'be the power of God and the wisdom of God' in bringing some lost soul home?"

"You may like it, but I like the good old music,



when people did not sing by *rule*, but every one sung as he pleased. I was clerk in this very church for twenty years. Many a day have I lined out in the good old days, when they only lined one line at a time. I think lining out the most solemn way yet."

Another old man objected to the choir. He contended that it was not a true choir. "It only contained twenty, and it takes twenty-four to make a quire!"

Nevertheless, the singing was a success, and the preaching likewise. A few months after settlement, at the first communion season, no less than twenty-eight persons were received as new members of the church. Howard prayed as well as worked. He established prayer-meetings in different parts of the congregation, with one for all in the church on Wednesday evenings. This evening was the most enjoyable of all. Just one hour was spent in the service, which consisted entirely of voluntary exercises—no one to occupy more than three minutes at a time. A short prayer, a verse of Scripture, a word, a thought, a few verses of a psalm to be sung. At first scarcely a word was uttered, but diffidence and embarrassment wore away, and one after another found a voice to utter what the heart felt.

The young pastor at times became very much discouraged. He could not understand the coldness, the



lack of enthusiasm, manifested on the part of his parishioners. Many hours of distress he spent on his knees in his closet, pleading for more faith and patience. So burdened did his soul become with the responsibility resting on him, that he spent whole nights in prayer for God's reviving power, for his rich blessing on his own poor labors. After one Saturday night spent in prayer, he went to church, feeling that he could not preach. He had not given the usual time and attention to his sermon, for all week he could only pray. The words of his text were, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." During the opening exercises he felt as though he would surely fail, and even when he read his text, the burden of doubt still oppressed his soul. In his distress he offered a silent petition for help. Soon his own burdens were forgotten. He heeded not the eyes upon him, many of them ready to criticise every word. He only knew he was a messenger sent from heaven—a dying man speaking to dying men. He felt that the present was the only time he was authorized to offer the privilege of choosing a Redeemer. To-morrow it might be too late. All eyes turned upon him. There was no whispering, sleeping or gazing around, as was sometimes the case. Many eyes filled with tears, and many warm pressures of the hand did he receive, as he left



the church from those whose hearts were too full to speak. One young man, the leader of the choir, who had been a special object of prayer and solicitude, whispered in his ear, "I have chosen." "Thank God," fell from the pastor's lips. "Go home and pray for the other members of your choir."

Seeking his own chamber, he dropped upon his knees, with a prayer of thanksgiving. The cloud was brightening, and he hoped soon to see it lifted, and find many seeking the road to heaven. That night he preached from the words, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." When he closed, he requested any who were troubled in soul to remain for a short time. Three besides young Harper stayed. This was the beginning of a great revival, not only in Howard's church, but in all the churches in town. Some of the old men, among whom was Deacon Biggs, did not like these meetings mixing up with other denominations. He said it was a foolish excitement which would soon die out. However, he found his own soul warming with the love of Jesus, who knows not his children by denominations, but by their faithful walk and conversation.

Mrs. Mays, who tried to keep the reins of the church in her hands, as she was the widow of a minister, remarked :



"If these things go on as they have been going for a week or two, it will be very hard to tell whether our church is composed of first-class people or of the *trash*. I see many of the 'lower-ten,' I might say, coming in and sitting as though they had the right."

These and other wicked and silly remarks, which were carried to Howard's ears, he forbore to notice, feeling that it was God he had to deal with, and not poor, weak, erring men and women. "God is my refuge; I will not fear what man can do."



## CHAPTER XVI.

### DOINGS AND SAYINGS.

"Many aim at nothing, and hit it."

A YEAR had now elapsed since Howard had accepted the pastorate of Easton Church. By careful economy he had saved enough from his modest salary to furnish the parsonage in a neat but humble manner, and he was about to bring his bride to the cottage. The congregation was pleased to learn that their pastor was about to occupy the little nook intended for the family of the minister. To be sure, Mrs. Mays had used her utmost endeavors to secure him for her daughter Mellie, who, she assured him, was just sweet sixteen. But many knew it was twenty years since she was born. Several other mammas who had marriageable daughters would not have objected to him as a son-in-law; but now, *of course*, were glad he had found a wife to assist him.

"If I had not known that he was engaged," said Mrs. Wilson, "I would not have had him visit us so fre-



quently; but as he boarded at my brother's, of course he seemed like one of the family. I would be very sorry to see one of my daughters marry a minister. Their wives are slaves. The eyes of the whole congregation are upon them. They are scarcely free moral agents."

"You may well say they are slaves, as far as hard labor goes," replied Mrs. Mays; "but a minister's wife is, or ought to be, the happiest woman in the world. Just look at the vast amount of good she has the power of doing. She is a leader of so many, and if she does her duty, she cannot fail to win both love and respect. I know something of the joys of a minister's wife, as well as her sorrows. Dr. Mays used to say I had more influence over his people than he had himself."

"Influencing them one way, while he was trying to influence them another," whispered Betty Brown, her nearest neighbor. "I have heard it said that she always kept up such a fuss in his church, that he could not stay any time in a place. Poor man! Death came mercifully to his relief."

"I would not care about a daughter of mine marrying Mr. Ashton at any rate," said Mrs. Mays.

"Why? why?" asked several voices.

"Oh, indeed! I suppose I should not have mentioned it. I believe it is a secret. I will say no more."



"You must tell, since you have excited our curiosity. We will think it is something dreadful, if you do not. Come, let us hear," said one of the ladies.

"Well, I did hear, but I do not know the truth of the report, that Mr. Ashton is come of a low family. It is said he has a sister, who is married to a poor good-for-nothing sot. This man has run away a time or two and left her. He (Mr. Ashton) has a brother, too, who broke his back, while engaged in some drunken row. He is now a cripple for life."

"Indeed!" You don't say so!" were some of the exclamations of these lovers of scandal.

"I know he has a crippled brother. I have heard him speak of him myself," replied Mrs. Wilson. "I did not like to be inquisitive, but now I will find out. If I thought Mr. Ashton would encourage such things, I would never go to hear him preach again."

"You well know that he is opposed to intemperance in every form," remarked Mrs. Holden. "I never knew any one so decidedly against the evil as he is, and I think I have a good chance of knowing, as he has been a member of my household for a year. Besides, you have all heard him speak of the dreadful sin of intemperance frequently in the pulpit."

"I knew he must be opposed to whiskey, or our Willie would have found it out. He is so temperate.



In fact he never tasted whiskey in his life. When he was a little child I would not allow him to taste one drop of the vile stuff, and ever since he had sense enough, he would not let it pass his lips," answered Mrs. Wilson.

"Did you never hear Mr. Ashton say how his brother was injured?" queried Mrs. Wilson of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Holden.

"I heard him say he was thrown from a buggy, but he did not say anything about him being intoxicated."

"Did he not say anything about that to you?" said Mrs. Wilson.

"He did not, nor did I consider it any of my business, whether he was intoxicated or not. It is enough for me to know that Mr. Ashton is a pure-minded, unselfish, noble man. It makes no difference to us what his family may be. If he is so unfortunate as to have intemperate friends, we should sympathize with and not blame him. Our business here is to make some arrangements about welcoming our pastor, and not try to find fault with him or his friends."

So they "put their heads together," and by the time appointed for the return of the minister and his fair young bride, everything was ready for their reception. The parlor, study and kitchen were furnished prettily, and the cupboard and cellar were well



filled. A table, fit for a king, was set in the nice, cool yard. What a pleasant surprise awaited the happy couple! All there were charmed with Mr. Ashton's gentle wife. He had wooed and won sweet Evie Lee, Milo's only sister. She was as graceful as *petite*, and her soft blue eyes and rich brown hair were the most beautiful in the world, at least in the eyes of her husband. Congratulations over, Dr. Roland made a short address, tendering them their welcome and love, along with "the little surprise the good sisters had provided." In a few words Howard tried to speak the thanks that so overflowed his heart. Invoking God's richest blessings on them, one and all, they separated, feeling that it was good to dwell together in unity.

After some time spent in making and receiving calls, these young people settled down to work in earnest. Early in the winter a "church festival" was proposed, and the Missionary Society was full of plans and purposes. The proceeds of this festival was to go toward the education of a Hindoo girl, the society having undertaken the obligation. There were Lila and Mary Tyndall, Laura Gaston, Louisa Clark (daughter of Judge Clark), Mellie Mays, and many others, who took an active part.

"I wonder why Dr. Roland takes such an interest



in that little *mute*, Rachel Sampson. Surely he has no intentions that way."

"Why, Lou Clark! how you do talk!" said Mary Tyndall. "You do not suppose that a fine, eligible young doctor like him would fancy a poor little waif, such as Rachel. I have heard that he was physician for the *factories*, and that he attended her through a severe spell of illness. Doubtless he feels a '*fatherly care*' over her."

"I am sure he could not find a sweeter, more intelligent girl should he look Easton through," chimed Ellen Gilbert (the rich merchant's only daughter), for the "law of kindness" ruled her tongue.

"Why, Ellen, do you even suppose that he would stoop to marry her?" questioned Mellie Mays.

"I do not think he would stoop, as she is most certainly his equal, not only in good looks, but also in point of education. You must remember that she once had as much of this world's riches as some of the rest of us. That all went, and her poor father followed, leaving Rachel only the legacy of honest poverty. Is it any disgrace for her to work to assist her widowed mother, and help educate her little brother and sister?"

"Why don't she teach music, or do something respectable, then?"



"There are more music-teachers than scholars. Rachel took the work nearest her. If she can keep up heart and do what she thinks is right, it is none of my business at what work she employs her hands. I wish her all success, and Dr. Roland, too, if he understands her true worth."

"Your market is made, Ellen, so you do not care for the rest of us," sneered Mellie. "There is Lina Stewart, too. She walks around as though she was proprietress of all she surveyed."

"Why, Mellie," whispered Laura Gaston; "she will hear you. Do not talk so loud."

"I don't care. Perhaps if she hears the opinion of others, she will come down to her proper level."

"You know, Mellie, that when we graduated, Lina stood above us all. She took the first honor, you remember."

"Her bold, independent manners are the result of our treating her as an equal. I delight in seeing her humbled. How she used to queen it over us! I despise her."

"The same disposition causes her now to consider our foolish slights beneath her notice. She is smart and we cannot deny it. Poverty is no disgrace. Our minister says truly, that nothing *degrades* but *sin*. And if you wish to win Dr. Roland's golden opinion,



you must treat his *protégés* with courtesy, at least," replied Ellen.

"I am not going to get down on my knees to Dr. Roland, or any other person. That little Mrs. Ashton goes around shaking hands with everybody. Do look! She is talking to those miserable Hart children now. How can she so stoop beneath her station!"

The festival was now the general topic. Young and old were enthusiastic. All were busy.

"We must have a *ring-cake*, by all means," said Hiram Lane, the leading young man of the church.

"What is the subject of so much interest, that is being discussed here?" inquired Mrs. Lyte, the acknowledged manager of the young folks' part.

"We were discussing *lotteries* in general, and *ring-cakes* in particular," replied Louisa Tyndall, laughing.

"Of course, we must have the *ring-cake* and the *grab-bag* too. We will have ten prize packages out of every hundred."

"And a *billiard-table*, and *card-desk*, and—"

"Stop, stop, Hiram, you rogue," said Mrs. Lyte, tapping him with her dainty fan, while she shook her graceful head.

"I am afraid Mr. Ashton will shake his grave head, when he hears of this wild scheme of ours," answered Mrs. Mays, joining the party.



"We need not say anything about it to him," responded Mrs. Lyte.

"He'll hear of it, and spoil everything just at the last moment. While old Betty Brown is about we can keep nothing secret, no matter how much we try."

"Oh, Mellie! it would not be right to try to conceal this matter, but Mr. Ashton is not a foggy. I think we can win his consent to our plan, if we do what is right," said Hiram Lane. "You know it is in a good cause, and he will see it."

"Certainly the cause is good," responded Mrs. Mays: "but you will see he will oppose it. Doubtless he will plead conscientious scruples."

"Or fear of offending some of the old brethren. Would not Deacon Biggs draw his long face down, if he knew we were going to deal in such 'sinful practices?'" laughed Mrs. Lyte. "Here comes Mr. Ashton now. I am going to make the appeal. The worst is not as bad as suspense."

"Don't mention the *grab-bag*: first sound him on lotteries in general. Say nothing about the cake," whispered Mellie.

"Oh, Mr. Ashton! we were just talking about you. What would be the best prizes to put in the *grab-bag*? jewelry, or—"

Howard opened his eyes wide. "*Prizes*—I cer-



tainly did not understand. Pardon me, Mrs. Lyte, you did not mean to say that you are going to indulge in anything of the kind."

"Why, certainly! Who ever heard of a festival without a *grab-bag*?"

"I fail to see the necessity of this particular 'amusement.'"

"You know the money will go to a good object, Mr. Ashton, and we will take in a good many dollars by this same *grab-bag*," said Hiram Lane, at a wink from Mrs. Lyte.

"Do you think the Lord would accept such a gift? We are commanded to bring the first of the flock. Surely we could not ask God's blessing on this scheme, and could we expect to receive good in exchange for known evil?"

"You will not object to a *ring-cake*, I am sure. Dr. Mays, during his lifetime, left all such things to the young people. If he did not approve of some trifling amusement, he was too prudent to interfere, knowing that others had opinions as well as he. When we were in Louisville, we had a grand *Fair* in our church, one winter, and there we had the regular *lottery*. Mr. Mays felt disposed to oppose it, but I convinced him that it would make him decidedly unpopular. I assured him that it would be no falsehood in him to



say, that he had not been consulted, if the old fogies should find fault. Rev. Byerly, over at Leesburg, not only encouraged these things, but I have seen him auctioneering lottery packages, and buying *ring-cake*, and eating it, too."

"We will not expect Mr. Ashton to take part with us, but only to look on, and permit the rest of us to sin," said Hiram Lane.

"I am opposed to everything bearing any resemblance to lottery, and I would consider myself just as guilty as those who engaged in this evil, if I did not raise a warning voice against it. I cannot countenance anything of the kind."

"Other ministers do," whispered Mellie, just loud enough for Mr. Ashton to hear.

"My dear Miss Mays, if *they* see no harm in these things, would it be justifiable in me, who feel and know these practices to be sinful and injurious, to fold my hands and say, I take no part, therefore the sin is not mine? 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to *him* it is sin.' I hope you will think differently on the subject," he continued, as he left them to join another group.

"The dolt!" exclaimed Mellie. "It is really too bad. If he would attend to his sermons, it would do us more good."



"Never mind, my dear!" laughed Mrs. Lyte. "We'll check-mate him yet. These *ring-cakes* and *grab-bags* are old anyway. Let them go. We will get up something new."

"Oh, yes! the nasty sour grapes. We would not have them."

"Now, Hiram, be still, you tease. I am planning for your benefit, and do not wish to be interrupted."

"I'm all attention; pray go on."

"Sit down, and put your lazy wits to work, and help outwit this *preacher* of ours, who needs to be saved from his own foolishness,—suppose we prepare a nice lot of *tableaux*—something that will be popular."

"Or a *first-class masquerade ball*. One would be as likely to go through as the other," replied Hiram.

"We will try the *tableaux* first, at any rate." And so it was arranged.

Everything was ready for the feast. Only a few wreaths were needed for cakes, and so forth. Faithful Rachel Sampson sat in a quiet corner, finishing one of the many wreaths she had made. While others planned, she worked. She had been persuaded to take part in a *drama*. Mrs. Lyte selected her to represent a certain character, saying there was not another girl in town suited so well; and Mrs. Lyte's word was law. Rachel was busy with her own thoughts, when she



was startled by hearing her own name mentioned by a bevy of girls near her.

"Why did you ask that demure Rachel Sampson to take part in our drama, Mellie?" asked Mary Tyndall.

"It was not I who asked her. You might know I would not stoop quite so low. It was that *managing* Mrs. Lyte. She fancies her 'little mouse,' as she calls Rachel, has very superior taste. She has taken quite a notion to her."

"Has she, or is it because Dr. Roland pays court at Rachel's shrine, and *he belongs to our set?*" asked Mary.

"I think you are both wrong, girls," replied Laura Gaston. "She just selected her, because she is such an easy, good-natured girl. She knew she would do just as she was told. Mrs. Lyte just manages her as she would a machine."

"Well, it is too provoking to be obliged to mix with all classes. I wish I was out of it," sighed Mary.

Mellie was beginning to reply, when Rachel stepped up, her face burning with shame and indignation, and answered for herself. "Girls, there need be no blushing on my account. I am ashamed to say, I was persuaded to take a part in this foolish drama. I now declare my place vacant, and you are at liberty to select one



more worthy, and better qualified to fill it; one who can 'mix with our set,' without bringing disgrace, by her 'mouse-like' proclivities." Bowing coldly she turned and left them; not heeding embarrassed apologies and declarations of regret.

Now arose a tumult about filling this important place, as it was the best drama on the list; Mrs. Lyte was called in, and scolded the girls for spoiling her plans. "What's the difference whether she is just *first-class* or not, girls, so she performs her part well? When your tongues are so busy and your hands idle, your eyes should be everywhere, so as to discover, if the object of your ridicule is in range of your voices."

"I see," laughed Hiram Lane, who had witnessed the whole scene from his desk, "Mrs. Lyte cares more for the effect than the cause."

"Who don't? It makes no difference what one says about me, if I don't hear it. I am going to see Rachel, and try to undo your work," and off she went. But all her smiles and caresses were in vain. Rachel's eyes were opened, and she could see she had been duped into playing a part, she now thought entirely unbecoming and wrong; and she was glad the girls had opened a way for her escape.

Mr. Ashton did not discover that there were *tableaux* and *dramas* on the programme, until the day before



that fixed for the festival. He went to headquarters, for he was not long in conjecturing where this thing originated. Mrs. Lyte first tried to laugh him out of such obsolete notions. When this failed she tried the power of her soft, winning voice, in flattery. Not succeeding here, she next called in her allies, but all that could be said in favor of this pet scheme was answered by the faithful pastor. He objected unreservedly to performances of this kind in connection with church work. In fact he was not much in favor of them, even in schools, where they properly belonged. He felt that if they persisted in these performances, some of which were not the purest, he could not consent to be present. Mrs. Lyte had to acknowledge herself fairly conquered for once. She submitted gracefully, as she always did, remarking to the girls when she saw their chagrin, "Convince a man against his will, he's of the same opinion still." The festival was over at last, but not without many little things occurring to mar the enjoyment of the occasion.

Howard was glad when all was over. He hoped now to see more interest in the prayer-meetings, Sabbath-school, and in the house of God. All had been neglected, during these days of excitement. Now he hoped they would all go to work.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### HARVEST OF DEATH.

"In times of trouble call on me, and I will answer thee."

"The beautiful is vanished, and returns not."

PRAYER was the man's as it had been the boy's great stronghold. The weary, discouraged pastor still prayed for everything he needed, or *thought* he needed. He now spent much time on his knees, in his closet, where no eye but God's kept watch. Yet somehow "the heavens seemed brass, and the earth iron." No new life was manifested among his people. He knew Harry and Evie were both praying. Why not all spend the same day, for particular prayer, for God's blessing on his poor, weak efforts? He wrote, also, to the "Fulton-Street Prayer-meeting," requesting prayer, on the same day as the one set apart by himself, wife and brother, and the answer came, as it always does, when the petitions are in faith. The prayer-meetings began to grow in interest. The church was filled to overflowing, and the Sabbath-school was better attended than ever before. One after



another arose for special prayer, until it seemed a very Pentecost. *Family* prayer-meetings were established, where two or three families met every night, for devotional exercises. Those blessed meetings! How sweet their memory! How many hearts looked to those precious hours of prayer, as the happiest spent on earth! These gracious meetings had scarcely closed, till another and still more solemn series of gatherings called the people to the house of God. So quickly does "sorrow follow on the heels of joy."

That modern scourge, diphtheria, entered the peaceful town, and desolated many hitherto happy homes. It prevailed in its most malignant type, defying medical skill, and setting at naught all known remedies. Scarcely a day passed that the gate of the Cemetery remained closed. Somebody's door was craped to-day; no one knew where the death-angel would next strike. Not only little children were laid to rest, but the youth and strong manhood were laid low in the dust. The merchant left his desk, and the smith his anvil. The student closed his book, and the belle forsook her toilet. All, in their busy rounds—stopped—stood still, and then lay down to die! Death was everywhere:

"Thou art around us in our peaceful homes,

And the world calls us forth, and thou art there."



Howard and Evie were among the constant watchers. Night and day found them by the couch of the sick or dying. Many of the new converts of their church were almost carried from the altar to the grave. What comfort was there in the thought that this harvest of death had been preceded by the ingathering of souls into the kingdom! Sometimes whole families of children were laid, side by side, in the churchyard. Out of eight children, Mr. Tyndall buried six. Only Mary and little Jamie were left. Hiram Lane was one of the first to cross the river of death. He died full of hope of a blessed immortality. Mrs. Mays buried her youngest child, Willie, a boy of four years. Deacon Biggs lost two bright little girls. And Rachel Sampson closed the eyes of her little sister, Annie. Prayer-meetings were thinly attended now, but those who met were full of the Spirit of God. There was a meeting daily, for prayer, in the pastor's study. Prayer for the stay of the pestilence—for the recovery of the sick—for the preparation of those appointed to die—for the healing of the broken-hearted. Such prayer comes from the heart, and reaches to Heaven. Often the name of some loved one would be sent, asking for prayer, that the precious life might yet be spared, and *how* often, God only knows, were the dear ones raised up, by a prayer-hear-



ing God, in answer to these petitions. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the world." All the dear ones called away were not of the Shepherd's fold. Some would die pleading with friends to save them. One young man, an unbeliever, who possessed much of this world's goods, and who had attended the Gospel-meetings, only to scoff, now died raving, and calling for time to repent. His last words were those of the dying Queen Elizabeth: "Millions of gold for an inch of time;" but, alas! it was too late. The dreadful message had gone forth in his case. "Time was, but time shall be no more"—"I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh." Never did Howard so tremble in death's presence as when listening to this man's unavailing cries, when his fear came as desolation, and his destruction as a whirlwind—when distress and anguish came upon him. With what force did the words of the Psalmist come to his mind:

"All unprotected, lo! I stand,  
No friendly guardian at my hand,  
No place of flight or refuge near,  
And none to whom my soul is dear."

What a terrible thing to stand unprotected, and death knocking at the door! What was wealth, posi-



tion, love of friends, or all combined, when the soul was out of Jesus, and all earthly grandeur was passing away forever! "Only Jesus can make a dying bed seem soft as downy pillows are." How comforting in times of trouble, to know that Jesus is at the helm! He has said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day."

The death-angel had reaped his harvest, and the town once more resumed its daily duty. Oh! what a void in many hearts! Here, an infant voice was hushed—there, all the household pets were swept away. Yonder, the young man was stricken down in his strength; and here, lies the young maiden in her beauty. How the heart wells up with untold sorrows, and the eyes fill with unshed tears, when we feel that we shall see their faces no more! Nevermore will they greet us with their loving voices. They are gone, to return no more. The world moves on, just as though we had not buried our dead out of our sight. Just so it will be when we are gone. But is this all, and naught beyond on earth? Ah, no! Thy brother, thy sister, shall rise again.



"'Tis this that makes our darkness day,  
'Tis this that makes our earth a heaven."

What support would bereaved friends have, were they denied the consolations of the gospel? How vain, and *worse* than vain, are all the comforts earth can bestow in the dark hour, when we first begin to realize that we shall hear the loving voice no more! Infidelity disappears as mist before the morning sun, when death comes knocking at the door. No matter of what faith we boast, while in health—when the dying hour draws near, we want the Christian's faith,—the Christian's hope,—the Christian's God.

"The air is full of farewells to the dying,  
And mournings for the dead ;  
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,  
Will not be comforted !

"Let us be patient ! These severe afflictions  
Not from the ground arise,  
But oftentimes celestial benedictions  
Assume this dark disguise.

"We see but dimly, through the mists and vapors ;  
Amid these earthly damps,  
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers  
May be heaven's distant lamps."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HEART FAINTS AND FAILS.

"At evening time it shall be light."

**A**NOTHER year has come and gone, leaving many vacancies, filling many gaps. A bright, dark-eyed boy is now a resident of the parsonage. Of course he is a paragon of excellence, notwithstanding he eats, cries and sleeps just like other babies. Little Kenneth is supposed to know his own name already, and the whole congregation claims him. He has enough stockings to supply a whole family of babies; for all the maiden ladies must, of necessity, make a present, and what is more useful, or less expensive, than a pair of good, warm socks? There are enough tin rattles and whistles to start a tin shop, beside many other presents too numerous to mention.

Ralph this winter has been doing worse than ever before. Goldie, or little seven-year-old Willie, has been compelled often to seek him, late at night, and they always found him in his old haunt, at the dilapidated tavern, which, in truth, was nothing more than



one of the vilest grog-shops, where men and boys were schooled for the Penitentiary. All the pleadings of friends were lost on poor, fallen Ralph. But we will not dwell on these sickening recitals. Let us hasten on to the closing scene of this drama. A year or two more of dissipation and sorrow are added to the past. Ralph has been away again, on an aimless ramble. No cause known for this desertion of his family, except the love of whiskey. For three long, weary months, the faithful wife has watched in vain for tidings of the husband, who once was her pride, her strong rock. She never had forgiven herself for the course she had pursued in the early months of her married life. She greatly regretted, that at her bridal feast, she had insisted on placing wine on the board. But for that, Ralph might have been saved.

She still had strong faith and hope that he would yet be rescued from a drunkard's grave. She prayed that repentance might come, if it came only over her coffin. Even her life she was ready to sacrifice, for this faithless husband, who had brought her nothing but sorrow. Her constant prayer was, "Lord, save him at any cost!" He returned one night unannounced: but she was not surprised. She was looking for him. She received him gladly and tenderly; listened to his promises of living a new life.



"Ralph," she replied, "I firmly believe God will rescue you, even though he tarries long. Though this poor body lies mouldering in the grave, God will answer my prayers, and we will meet in heaven."

"Do not talk of dying, Goldie. You must live long, to enjoy this new-found peace. I will keep my pledge, and will try to make up for all the pain I have caused you."

"I shall not be long with you, Ralph. I feel that my days are numbered; but, from heaven, I will look down and rejoice to know that you are free."

"Not so, Goldie! You must not die. You must live, to assist me in my new life. I have cheated you out of all your best years. For ten long years I have kept you toiling and weeping, when you should have been living in happiness and comfort. You have endured all without murmuring. I wonder you did not sink beneath your heavy burden years ago. You have clung faithfully to me, through all my wanderings, and, now that I am determined to forsake my evil course, looking to God for help, you must not leave me."

"Do not flatter yourself, Ralph. I know I am dying. I have known it for months; but now that you are home, 'clothed, and in your right mind,' this sorrow along with the sting of death is taken away. I am



not afraid to die. I am sure Jesus will not forsake me, when the last trying hour comes. In that happy land I will again embrace my darling angel May. My little sister and brother, too, are there. You too must come. Heaven, it seems to me now, would *not* be heaven without you. I will wait and watch for you. You must lead our little ones heavenward. This is my great charge. May we be an unbroken *family* in heaven—not one missing.”

Ralph flattered himself that Goldie was improving. Her cough was no better, to be sure, but she was so cheerful. He did not know that his presence made the change. But, when a few weeks more had passed, and Ralph beheld his fair wife, with her dead babe on her breast, both fast asleep, never to awake again, he knew he had been building on a false foundation. We will pass over the anguish of these terrible days, when the heart-broken man could only utter words of deep remorse, for the wreck he had made. Oh! what now would he not give to be able to recall the last ten years of wretchedness! but, alas! it is now too late—too late! Tears cannot wash away their memory; nor can vain regrets make any reparation!

Goldie was laid to rest, by the side of her first-born, old in sorrow, young in years. Her parents, brothers and sisters, as they shed the last tears over the coffin of



this one, so dear, could say in very truth, "The Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." We would not have her back. She has borne so much, suffered so much, we are glad to see her at rest, "safe in the arms of Jesus." Just ten years had elapsed, since Goldie went out from her father's house, a happy bride. To-day, she is carried to the tomb, a heart-broken wife. Ten years ago, she had a kind husband, wealth, and everything to make home happy. To-day, she is borne from a poor tenant-house. Rum robbed her of all life holds dear, and now of life itself. Sleep on, and take thy rest, sweet one! Nevermore will thy heart bleed and ache, for the wrongs done by the hand that should have protected thee! Gone are all thy troubles, pain and tears. "Old things have passed away! behold, all things have become new!"



## CHAPTER XIX.

### SEEDS BY THE WAYSIDE.

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

"I have come to tender you my thanks for your sermon of yesterday. It did me so much good."

Howard stopped his monotonous walk up and down his study, and turned to encounter the earnest gaze of Cyrus Lane, whose brother Hiram we have mentioned during his life and at his death. Cyrus had strayed from the heavenly fold. For years he had not entered the house of God, except as a self-constituted critic. He was a profound scholar, but the deeper he dived into mystic lore, the further he receded from the God in whose hands are the issues of life and death. The death of his only brother was to him a heavy blow. Since the trying event he had been, if possible, more unapproachable than ever. It had been the prayer of the young minister that this great affliction might be the means of leading this talented young man back to



the God he had forsaken ; but so fenced in did he seem, that even Howard, ever so hopeful, did not really expect this petition to be answered. Did this servant of the Most High, who had so often sought help in times of trouble, nor ever sought without receiving aid, limit the power of that great God, who never said, "Seek ye my face in vain?" He felt yesterday's sermon had been a failure. The calls upon his time during the week had been many and urgent, and he had been obliged to toil and pray far into Saturday night, bringing a nervous headache into the pulpit Sabbath morning ; consequently he was irritable, uncharitable—magnifying petty grievances. The sight of Cyrus Lane, sitting so attentive in the farthest corner of the church, annoyed him very much. "He came to criticise and ridicule my poor efforts," he said to himself. So he floundered through the morning service somehow, and came home very much discouraged. Evie gently remonstrated with him for his lack of faith, reminding him that he was only to plant ; that it was God who gave the increase. He replied, "I wish no increase from such seed as I have been sowing to-day. My sermon this morning was uncharitable, unchristian ; if not in words at least in thoughts."

This, then, was blue Monday. So busy was he with self-upbraidings, that he did not hear the gentle tap at



his study-door. The words coming from the lips of the very man of whom he had been harboring such ungenerous feelings amazed him. The earnest look and trembling voice told plainly he had not come to mock. Grasping the hand of his visitor, Howard motioned him to a seat.

“You did not expect a visit from me, who have so purposely avoided all your loving efforts. Doubtless you thought I was steeling my heart against the sad dispensations of Providence that have visited us so recently. During my sainted brother’s beautiful Christian life, we had many discussions; he maintaining the satisfying and all-sufficient nature of the Christian religion; I ridiculing and condemning every faith I could not fully understand. But when sickness came; when death hovered over our hitherto unbroken home, then it was I felt like Ethan Allen. ‘I would not have him die in my faith, but that of our mother.’ When this dear brother, for whom the world promised so much, gave all up without a murmur, cheerfully submitting everything to the will of God, I was forced to acknowledge that there was a reality in Christianity. I could not doubt that my own dear brother was sincere in his protestations when dying. I said to myself either the Bible is true, and Christians are all right, and I am all wrong, or else



they are wofully deceived ; and if they are deceived, is not this perfect peace, this holy dying, worth more than all my fine theories? If, at the last, there is only annihilation, why not rest in this peaceful belief? Why not take all the comfort religion can give during this short, fitful life? I asked myself, If Hiram's faith was the true faith, what blissful enjoyment awaited him in his heavenly abode! How transcendently happy the glorified spirit that has escaped from its prison-house of pain! How magnificent must be that place where 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart felt' anything of its beauty or grandeur! On the other hand, if his belief was only a myth, as I affirm, what could he lose? If when the life went out of the clay tabernacle, it went down as the spirit of a beast, what harm could all these bright expectations accomplish? They cheered him in life and upheld him in death ; they gave him joy and comfort while living, and peace and hope when dying ; they could do no more than sink with him into oblivion."

"Did you have any conversation on this subject during his sickness?" asked Howard.

"He tried to talk to me on different occasions, but I would not permit him, as I persuaded myself that he would soon be better, and I told him we would talk



when it was not such a task for him. Toward the last his sufferings were so great he could not converse much; but at his earnest request I promised to read the Bible *through* as carefully, and with as much attention, as I gave science and philosophy. His dying prayer, for God's blessings on my Scripture reading, has been answered. Since that morning, when we laid him to rest in the quiet church yard, I have been treading my weary pilgrimage alone. Too proud to accept your assistance when tendered, I have been ashamed to ask your counsel while struggling among the breakers."

"Why did you not come and open your heart to your pastor at once? How unmindful I have been of my duty!"

"It was I," replied the young man; "I who stopped my ears to your words of warning; I who chose to stumble along over rough places, when I was fully aware you would have been most willing to lend me a helping hand. I went to church yesterday, almost ready to despair. God certainly directed you in the selection of your text, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Hundreds of times before had I heard the verse handled, but never did it come to me with such meaning. Such love! such pity! such *tender* pity! I listened for eternity, and came



away satisfied. Like water to the thirsty, or bread to the hungry, those precious words came to my waiting soul. They answered every purpose, filled every desire, gave joy for sorrow and light for darkness."

"And I in my weakness felt I had never made such a failure. I was not well prepared, and I felt you had come to ridicule and criticise illogical reasoning."

"I drank in every word, and carried away with me a heart so overflowing with happiness, that had hundreds of errors occurred, I would not have observed them."

"I said this very morning I wanted no harvest from such seed as I had sown yesterday. Surely God saves by the foolishness of preaching. I will never again be discouraged while I try to follow where God leads."

"It does seem strange, *surpassing* strange, when I look back over the last eight or ten years of my life, that I should have forgotten my father's God, and drifted so far out on the tossing, treacherous billows of infidelity. While I admired the glorious orb of day, sailing majestically through the heavens, warming our earth to new life and beauty! while I gazed entranced at the starry host, whose countless millions nightly bestud the sky! while I beheld in awe the sublimity of the lightning's forked tongue, and listened in terror



to the thunder's dreadful peal, I had the presumption to boldly deny their Author. How I could, even for a moment, think there was no God of nature, and yet watch the opening bud, the expanding leaf, the babbling brook, the tiny rain-drop, with so much pleasure, I cannot understand."

"There is no way of accounting for our unbelief, except by our corrupt natures. How any man, read in science and philosophy, can boldly deny the existence of a Deity and yet love and admire the beauty and adaptation of his works, is the greatest mystery I have ever tried to solve."

"All things being are in mystery ; we expound mysteries by mysteries ;

And yet the secret of them all is one in simple grandeur.

All intricate, yet each path plain, to those who know the way ;

All unapproachable, yet easy of access, to them that hold the key ;

We walk among labyrinths of wonder, but thread the mazes with  
a clue,

We sail in chartless seas, but behold ! the pole-star is above us.

For counting down from God's good-will, thou meltest every riddle  
into him."

"There is so much wisdom displayed even in the most minute of God's works,—so much that the finite mind cannot comprehend,—yet man accepts all these as they are, but because he cannot understand a Triune God, leaves him out entirely."



"The captious and cautious unbeliever is of all men weakest to believe :

Cut from the anchorage of God, his bark is a plaything of the billows :

The compass of his principle is broken, the rudder of his faith unshipped,

Chance and Fate govern all for him."

"But how came you, my friend, to drift into the unbeliever's current? You, who had a Christian home—a Christian education?"

"My first step in the wrong path was taken soon after I entered the firm of Aber & Wilson. Aber was a *strict church-member*. Wilson went to the house of God only on rare occasions, and although he was an upright man in all his dealings, he had no faith in Christianity. He often said the Bible was a good code of morals, but that Christians, as a class, were not as honorable as men of the world. He was always drawing comparisons between the two classes. He laughed at his partner, saying, 'He prayed on his knees the first day of the week, and he preyed on his neighbors the other six days.' Of the two men, all knew Wilson to be the most upright and trustworthy. Indeed, he was a model man, so far as morality went. This led me to draw unfavorable comparisons. I was on the alert, watching my cus-



tomers sharply. Any deviation from the right path, in a professor of religion, was noted at once, and every mark of honorable dealing, in a non-professor, was at once attributed to this cause. I soon lost all faith in religion, although I contended earnestly for a pure, moral life, such as the Bible alone directs. My mother was sorely grieved over my treachery to myself, my family and my God. She pointed me to the perfect pattern, in 'Whose mouth there is no guile,' but I had started down hill and nothing human could stop my downward course. I turned from words of love and entreaty, scoffed at God's messages sent by his servants, turned a deaf ear to the warnings of a merciful Providence. Nothing, *nothing* would do to stop me in my mad career but the fiery furnace of affliction. The precious blood of the Lamb of God I counted unworthy, until my own dear brother's life was paid a ransom for the opening of my sin-sealed eyes."

"When we will not heed God's teachings, nor stop to consider his dealings with us, in mercy he sends sorer trials. His darkest providences are often blessings in disguise, but we see not the silvery lining of the dark cloud. Self must be emptied out of our hearts to make room for the King in his glory. He must have the first place in our affections, or none. 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' 'Son, give me thy heart.'"



“But that my brother should have died untimely, for *my* sake,—died—when the world was so fair and lovely, and he counted on doing so much in the Master’s vineyard, causes my heart many a bitter throb of remorse.”

“Say not he died untimely. There are no untimely deaths. The little babe that just opens its eyes on earth, and then closes them forever, accomplishes the mission it was sent to perform. God takes no one out of the world, while his work remains unfinished. Your brother, with a heart overflowing with love to his God, hoped and planned to do him much service; these were his thoughts,—not God’s. The work designed him by the all-wise Father was not left undone. His life ended, your salvation secured,—the work goes on, not even terminating when the grave closed over his lifeless form. Say not his death was ‘untimely’ if a soul was rescued thereby. Many a devoted disciple spends a whole lifetime serving the Master; and does not bring a single soul home to glory. The immortal soul! Its price cannot be estimated! Worlds cannot buy it! The ceaseless ages of eternity could not compute its value! It now devolves on you—awakened by your brother’s death—to take up his work, where he laid it down, and make it yours. Cease repining at the workings of the Eternal,



bow submissively under his chastening hand, feeling it is thy Father who wills it thus."

"God willing, I will not be an idler in the vineyard of my Lord; yet I am sure I will fall far short of filling the place of the devoted brother we lament."

"Go forward in God's strength. He asks no one to go alone. He will roll away the stone, and divide the waters of the sea,—follow where he leads. You will not be without a chart to direct you, while you have the open Bible in your hands. Its promises have anticipated all our wants, and they are high and deep and broad enough to take all our varied lives underneath their spreading wings. Oh! these matchless promises! How precious! How all-satisfying! How abundant! Every possible vicissitude of life and death has its *own* peculiar promise. Are we thirsty, we are invited to come and drink. Are we hungry, he says, 'Eat, oh, friends.' Are we in poverty, there is an invitation to 'Come and buy without money and without price.' In weakness, 'He is our strength,' in trouble 'He is our deliverer,' in need of sympathy, 'He pitieth us as a Father.' When we are weary and dissatisfied with the world, he invites us to 'Come unto him and rest.' In pestilence and destruction, though 'A thousand fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand,' we have the assur-



ance 'they shall not come nigh us.' Does temptation assail us, his own promise stands good, 'That we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear,' for 'with the temptation he will also make a way of escape.' Trust him, trust him fully at all times and under every circumstance, for he who has promised is able to fulfill—in him they are all yea and amen."

"I came to thank you for the good I received from your words yesterday, I came rejoicing in my new-found happiness. So full was I of this blessed, restful peace, that I fear I had not a thought of the great responsibility resting on me as steward of the Lord. I go thanking you more than words can tell, for your sympathy and plain directions for my pilgrim-journey. With the sacred book for my compass I hope to sail heavenward, and, if God so wills it, not alone. Yet the thought that I cannot undo the evil I have accomplished, that I cannot give back the pure faith to those I have led astray, holds me back with a vice-like grip."

"You must break away from this delusion, that will drag you down, without freeing your victims. 'Forgetting the things that are behind,' work, be instant in season and out of season. This is the way. Show to the world and your followers that you have come out of darkness, into Christ's marvelous light, and are



in earnest. Teach them by example as well as precept, that you are not ashamed to own your Lord. Do not for a moment sit down with folded hands, and weep over a past, that is beyond recall, but go to work, and whatever you find to do, do it. You have your work to accomplish,—a work no other hands can perform. God placed you just where you are, and expects you to use all the influence at your command for his glory.

“ ‘Thou camest not to thy place by accident:  
It is the very place God meant for thee.’ ”



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE END.

"Every drunkard has his victim,  
Father, mother, wife or child:  
Making desolate and barren,  
Once where peace and plenty smiled."

RALPH determined to begin life anew. Too often had he failed, trusting in his own strength. Now his heart, softened by bereavement, sought and found help from a Higher Power. He took up this new life for the sake of his little ones. No looking back could restore the dead. Vain regrets were useless. His life hitherto had been a failure—not because he had no chart or compass by which to sail, but because he heeded not the guiding star, that always pointed heavenward.

Now, when his *household* god was shivered, his tearful eyes sought only heaven. "Ah! the house 'built upon the sand' may do for sunny weather;" but when the storm-king is abroad in his wrath, "we need the 'Rock of Ages.'" Clinging to the Only One, who could succor, in such a helpless state, Ralph



lifted the burden laid down by Goldie. Taking his little ones by the hand, he invoked the assistance of *her* God, in keeping the charge she had committed to him.

Little Birdie, the tender babe of two years, watched in vain for mamma; then drooped, faded and died. Earth was too cold for her, without the mother-love, to shield her in her warm breast. Only Willie and Helen now claimed his care. The rest all safe in the land where "storms do never come."

Home, to his boyhood's haunts, the weary man takes all that is left him. How welcome are these dear little ones!—aye, and the father too, to the home and hearts of the lonely grandparents. "If our boy will do right *now*, all the past will be forgiven, and forgotten," said they. Let us hope that this reformation will be lasting, that Goldie's prayers have been answered, and that her coffin has accomplished the mission she desired it should. We trust Ralph is safe, but oh! what a price was paid for his redemption! When will this evil—this great evil of intemperance—be blotted out from our land, and from all lands?

Harry, who had so long been a sufferer, on its account, too, has ended his short life. His battles are fought,—his victory is won. He died, as he had lived,—trusting only in his dear Saviour. "None but



Jesus,—none but Jesus," were his last words, as he went up higher.

Howard is still working and praying—doing what his hands and heart find to do.

We will leave him and his friends for the present. Perhaps, in the future, we may take up this life, so suddenly dropped, and learn something of the working and self-denial of a Minister's daily life.

**THE END.**



























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